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Is the 'Intention' There? On the Impact of Scientism on Hermeneutics

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Ever since the mid-twentieth century, there has been a prevailing tendency of eliminating the author's existence in his or her text, as well as the existence of his or her intention. The practice of negating the meaning of the author's intention and thereby imposing arbitrary interpretations on the text to serve the critic's own interpretive purpose, has led contemporary literary hermeneutics onto the wrong road of relativism and nihilism. It is sensible for us to identify an impact of scientism on such a hermeneutic tendency. However, no matter how we try to deny and dissolve the author's intention, its being in the text is a hard fact that always determines the text's quality and value and influences the readers' understanding and interpretation. The author's intention runs through the whole process of the text's creation, displaying itself in all the plans and designs of the text, such as its language, structure and style. It is a false question to ask whether intention exists in literary creation, and the idea that the other person can be totally independent of the author's intention to assert the meanings or significance of the text will finally lead us to nowhere but sheer subjective imagination. Any serious and responsible critic must research in depth to first bring out the author's intention, and then bring out the text's historical and social milieus. This is the foundational step towards fair and justified interpretation of the text. Since literary works are the objectification of the authors' thoughts and mind power, we, whatever theories we are interested in, should give the author and his or her intention due respect. This is undoubtedly a scientific attitude toward literary studies.

1. Introduction

It might be best to begin by emphasizing the fact that the development of contemporary hermeneutics has been influenced to a great extent by the thoughts and trends of scientism. In fact, the argument of this article that the author's as well as the text's intention has always been denied too much, can well serve as an example to indicate such an impact on contemporary hermeneutics and literary criticism from the significant revolutions in science, especially revolutions happening in the discipline of physics. The fifteenth century is the century in which modern science grows. Be it classical physics or any other branch of science, all fields of modern

science have their own specific, concrete and relatively fixed object of research. Theorems, theories, assumptions and deductions proposed by modern scientists can be tested or proved by experiments or empirical methods, and thus the subject of the research (i.e. the scientist) and the object of research (i.e. the research target) constitute a detectable relationship of research. Contemporary literary criticism with modern science falls into a similarly clear pattern of relationship, with either the author or the text as the object of research, and the work of reading for or disclosing the author's intention is regarded as the basis of interpreting a text and its significance.

Since the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, mankind has explored deeper and deeper into the micro world, and theories of modern science on the basis of classical physics are becoming increasingly insufficient to explain a series of newly discovered scientific phenomena. More and more scientific theorems, theories, assumptions and deductions are beyond the proving capacity of direct experiments or empirical researches. Instead, their legitimacy stems from self-contended theoretical derivations or logical predictions as to the results of experiments. Revolutions caused by the theory of relativity, quantum mechanics, chaos theory and fractal theory in the fields of physics have brought about fundamental changes to people's understanding of the relationship between the subject and the object. Moreover, as the process of scientific research goes on, the interactions between the subject and the object have presented to us new characteristics. There is a distinct tendency of the subject integrating with the object, yet playing a much more decisive role in their relationship. The subject is intervening more and more into the object. It seems that the subject plays too leading a role and takes too dominant a position in the originally mutually restricted relationship. Along with what has been happening in modern science, contemporary hermeneutics and literary criticism have also witnessed a series of profound changes concerning the subject-object relationship. The author and the text once were the centre of literary criticism, yet both have been abandoned as 'fallacies' and excluded from criticism. By denying them, the critic arrogates to himself the supremacy of interpretation, controlling the fates of the author and the text, and usurping the power of arbitrary interpretation.

We hold it true that from the beginning of a writing process to its end, or to put it more exactly, from the very instant a writer decides to write something to the final fulfilment of this decision in the form of a text published or presented in any way to its readers, all the author's mental activities in this process, as well as all the expressions he or she has chosen, are the author's intention – the operation of the writer's subjectivity in consciousness. Ever since the 1940s, there has been an overall tendency of negating the existence of the author's 'intention' in a text and denying the significance of the intention to interpretation. The author's intention is discarded, thus giving way to the critic's intention. The practice of fitting the text to one's own theoretical assumptions and conclusions, a fallacy I have labelled as 'imposed interpretation' in previous articles, has turned out to be a force leading literary interpretation to go astray on the wrong road of relativism and nihilism.

However, whatever reasons we might find to dissolve or resist the existence of the author's intention in the text, and even if we accept the saying that 'the author is dead'

and agree to it in the sense that the author can do no more work once his or her text is rendered to its readers, the intention – here I define it as the author's intention – is always there. Its being in the text is a fact that always determines the value and significance of the text. No doubt it influences the readers' judgement, understanding and interpretation. Perhaps this influence works without our knowledge, or perhaps this influence arouses the readers' negative response of resistance. No matter what the reader's reaction might be, the author's intention is always there, penetrating and influencing, running through the whole process of the text's being read, understood and interpreted. Whether you acknowledge it or not, and whether you accept it or not, the intention is there. Since its continuous effect on our reading activity is inevitable, should we admit that the meaning and the significance of a text can be decided by a reader's subjective understanding alone, then without any need to consider the author's intention we would actually be agreeing that castles in the air are possible. Still, such a simple principle is being dismantled now. How could it be dismantled? What kind of theories have laid the groundwork for the dismantling of the author's intention? And what are the grounds for those theories? Looking back at the past 100 years' odyssey of Western literary criticism, we can pick out plenty of reasons to explain the phenomenon of dismantling the author's intention and preventing it from taking effect and functioning in our literary interpretation. As numerous as the reasons are, we can identify three main clues to the disappearance of intention from literary criticism: one is the 'intentional fallacy' proposed by W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, another is Clive Bell's 'significant form', and still another is the semiotics of structuralism which regards all texts as the automatic operation of signs and the author as merely a tool for such operation. Thus, structuralism holds the view that the fundamental way of a text's coming into being is the auto-organizing and self-constructing capacity of the semiotic system. In what follows, I will scrutinize the three main clues one by one, with the intention of inviting further clarifications on the topic.

2. The Intentional Fallacy

It is commonly acknowledged that the practice of negating the author's intention has its origin in Russian formalism of the early twentieth century. Its theorists, represented by Viktor Shklovsky, try to be different from the traditional mentality of socio-historical criticism then already long dominant. They turn from author-centred criticism to text-centred criticism, trying to pave the way for the independence and self-sufficiency of 'literariness'. With this, they lift the curtain for the dramatic growth of literary theories in the twentieth century. The New Criticism, proposed by critics such as John Crowe Ransom, and building on ideas of T.S. Eliot and I.A. Richards, represents the summit of the critical trend of focusing on the text's 'own' meanings. The spreading of this critical trend, especially the notion of the so-called 'intentional fallacy' has provided the ground for negating and dissolving the author's intention.

The term and concept of the intentional fallacy were first advocated by Wimsatt and Beardsley, when the New Criticism took root in the US in the 1940s. The doctrine

of the intentional fallacy argues that 'the design or the intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary arts'.[1] From the perspective of mimesis to the criticism of romanticism and positivism during the nineteenth century, the meaning of a literary work had always been related to the author's intention and the work itself had been regarded as the objectification of this intention. To Wimsatt and Beardsley, the so-called intentional fallacy is caused by a confusion between the poem and its origins, and represents a special case of what is known to philosophers as 'the genetic fallacy'. 'This fallacy begins by trying to derive the standard of criticism from the psychological causes of the poem and ends in biography and relativism' (Ref 1, p. 3). So they say that there is hardly a problem of literary criticism in which the critic's approach will not be qualified by his or her view of 'intention'.

No doubt the proposal of the intentional fallacy has certain sensible reasons and it has strengthened the critics' consciousness of the ontology of literature. But the sudden shift made by the intentional fallacy in the aspects of critical principle and methodology is just too simple and crude. Its insulating the text from its author and the outside world brings with it a big theoretical fallacy (or pitfall). When defining the word 'intention', they say it corresponds to the widely accepted usage of 'what he (one) intended' (Ref. 1, p. 4). Thus, they recognize the existence of the intention in reality; but they are against the too ready employment of the intention in literary interpretation. This recognition is the main difference between their views and those that extreme postmodernists will later hold about the intention. Meanwhile, they also admit that the intention is the 'design or plan in the author's mind', and 'has obvious affinities for the author's attitude toward his work' (Ref. 1, p. 4). Their basic attitude can be summarized as follows. First, they are against using the intention as the basis of criticism. Second, they are against using the intention as the criterion for judging a text's significance and value, since a poem should not *mean* but *be*, and a poem is a poem. Third, they think a literary work, especially a poem, is not the author's, because it is detached from the author at birth and goes about the world beyond the author's power to control it. These three points lay the foundation for their proposal of the 'intentional fallacy'. But, if we take a closer and deeper look into them, we can see that there are contradictions and dilemmas in their foundational statements.

In order to prove their theory of intentional fallacy, Wimsatt and Beardsley use T.S. Eliot's poetry as an example. They try to persuade us that it is in vain to imagine or conclude Eliot's intentions from the allusions, titles, quotations and annotations he frequently puts in his poems. 'If Eliot and other contemporary poets have any characteristic fault, it may be in planning too much' (Ref. 1, p. 17). With regard to their aversion to using 'the place of origin' in explaining literary works, a view I have mentioned at the beginning of this part of my text, we see a sharp inconsequence. Where does the text come from, if we say it does not come from the author's intention? When they say that 'There is a gross body of life, of sensory and mental experience, which lies behind and in some sense causes every poem…' (Ref. 1, p. 12), isn't this confirming something they declare that they are against? Isn't it a clear expression that there is a 'place of origin' in the matter of writing? Wimsatt puts

forward the idea that a text actually has nothing to do with the author's experience or its social and historical context, but according to René Wellek, Wimsatt is actually very interested in writers' biographies and literary histories, and he also admits the historically decided aspects of literary meanings and the influence of social milieu on many formal occasions.[2]

3. Significant Form

'Significant form' is a concept proposed by the British aesthetician Clive Bell. Using this expression as a key criterion, he denounces the referential meanings of works of art and questions the existence and function of the artists' intention in order to construct the independence and self-sufficiency of artistic creation. This forms the basis for postmodern theories advocating that the text has nothing to do with the author and his or her intention. Then what is 'significant form'? Here is Bell's explanation:

> … lines and colors combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions. These relations and combinations of lines and colors, these aesthetically moving forms, I call 'Significant Form'.[3]

'Significant form' is the one quality common to all works of visual art. In Bell's theory, the 'significant form' is purely a matter of form which excludes all referential connections to the outside world and restricts aesthetic concerns to the combination of lines and colours. 'Significant form' does not represent anything, nor delivers ideologies.

> For a discussion of aesthetics, it need be agreed only that forms arranged and combined according to certain unknown and mysterious laws do move us in a particular way, and that it is the business of an artist so to combine and arrange them that they shall move us.
>
> For the purpose of aesthetics we have no right, neither is there any necessity, to pry behind the object into the state of mind of him who made it. (Ref. 3, p. 11)

Obviously, by defining 'significant form' within the limited scope of form, Bell cuts off the natural relationship between the form and the reality, and denies the outside world as an object as well. Following his theory, the author's influential position in the production of a literary work is shattered. Bell believes that 'significant form' was the form behind which we catch a sense of 'ultimate reality' (Ref. 3, pp. 69–70). The 'ultimate reality' here is not the 'reality' we normally refer to in our daily communication, but 'that which lies behind the appearance of all things – that which gives all things their individual significance, the thing in itself, the ultimate reality' (Ref. 2, p. 224). Bell also holds the view that this 'ultimate reality' can only automatically manifest itself in 'forms', pure forms, instead of in any other way. Now, integrating his views on different aspects, we might generalize his logic in this way: the thing that controls an artist's creativity is actually his own emotion, for his emotion enables him to find 'significant form'; and perhaps more importantly, the artist gets his emotion

from 'ultimate reality'. The 'ultimate reality' it seeks to express is a metaphysical motive, belonging to 'the Other World'.

Bell defines 'significant form' as the essential feature of art, or as the commonality of diversified arts. Art is form. Art does not represent something or deliver ideology. The process of artistic creation centres on combinations of lines and colours, and during this process the artist himself can be understood as a tool under usage. What kind of form a specific work should take and in which way it can realize its form, depend, to a great extent, on the inner systematic rules and principles of artistic signs and meanwhile are restricted by them as well. The artist's psychology and intention, in fact, are irrelevant to the process. The idea of 'significant form' was an important conceptual discovery and a theoretical innovation of far-reaching influence. But still questions remain. No matter how pure or abstract the descriptions with which we might endow the concept of 'significant form', is the latter really able to insulate the author from, or negate the author's intention in, their text? Are the author's mind and psychology irrelevant elements to the text's coming into being? Should our understanding of any artfully wrought work be restricted to the understanding of its surface presentation in the narrow and self-sufficient sense? One might question Bell's argument from at least the following three perspectives.

First, who makes the combination of lines and colours that generates significance? Second, why is the combination made in this way, not in that way? Aren't there any motives or intentions pushing the artist's brush? Third, what is after all the 'emotion' behind the expression of the so-called 'ultimate reality'? And can we also understand 'significant form' as a 'tool' expressing the creators' feelings and thoughts? Now let's look into these questions one by one.

For the first question, one undeniable fact is that the lines and colours are not put on paper by some invisible hand, nor do works appear randomly out of nowhere, let alone mysterious manifestations of ideas from a transcendental world. Artists are the subjects. It is they who are painting freely and offering us their products. Some products are glorious and successful, some dim and vague; they are equally the results of the artists' actions in consciousness. It is the artists' actions, not the actions of somebody else. Even when an artist with colourful paints all over his or her body rolls and jumps freely on a big piece of canvas to make a work of art, the combination of lines and colours is still made by him or her, as the result of an artist's subjective creation – if we could call that kind of 'painting' artistic creation. From this perspective, no matter how casual or unusual one 'significant form' might be, it results from the artist's action and comes from his own awareness. The 'form' cannot cut off the connection between the author and the text.

For questions related to the second perspective, any text in the broad sense, like a piece of nameless music, is made by an artist who wants to express something. Maybe this something is what he or she feels. And maybe this something is what he or she thinks. What the artist feels is in essence what the artist thinks. Both are indicating intention. We may hear, then, some kind of conservative undertone in this utterance, signalling a 'though by no means certain' feeling, showing that Bell hesitates in saying that lines and colours are actually conveying to us something the artist feels.

For questions of the third kind, which are about how artistic techniques are generated and how they operate, we may link them to one argument emphasized by Bell. He emphasizes that simplicity and design are where the truth of artistic creation lies. Although the 'simplicity and design' here refers to practical techniques in creation, they are meanwhile the outcome under the guidance of the artist's inner spirit. Owing to the artist's inner spirit, through the means of simplifying his or her object and transferring it into a design, an artist creates a 'form', an independent and self-sufficient form.

Bell calls what an artist feels an 'absolute necessity', and this absolute necessity leads to the necessity of certain artistic forms. What an artist feels, therefore, occupies the core position of art and bears the highest significance. Why does one work of art take this form, not that form? Why is it designed in this way, not in that way? All these are determined by the absolute necessity behind it. That is to say, the absolute necessity of the inner world determines the most proper outside form and design, including details such as amounts and scales, bounds and levels, etc. Now, turning to literary studies, can 'significant form' be loosely applied in literary criticism as an excuse to deny the decisive role that the 'intention' can play in textual analysis? After all, is it possible that around the 'absolute necessity', a 'form' can automatically fulfil the work of organization and congregation, and falls into an entity so independent and self-sufficient that it involves no reference to the outside world? According to Bell, the nature of each form and its relation to all the other forms is determined by the artist's need of expressing exactly what he feels. The need of an artist is his need to express what he feels, and based upon this, he organizes and congregates materials in his text. What he feels is either his direct perception of the outside world or some modified or distorted reflection of the outside world – that is, the world in his psychological, emotional and mental spaces, indirectly telling us the referential relationship between a text and the outside world. When 'the artist's need of expressing exactly what he felt' is summoned here, isn't his 'need' here actually 'the intention' that many critical theories and schools would not like to admit, yet they cannot really say no?

We take it as a false proposition that artistic creation involves no 'intention' and has no purpose. To create art is one's choice of actions as a subject who knows what he or she is doing. To create art is also an artist's basic way of expressing and presenting him or herself. When an artist declares that they have no subjective motive to express or present, then who is the one who has triggered his action of artistic creation? Contemplating a work of art in detail, we often find creative details revealing the artist's intention, let alone the 'significant form' on a much more comprehensive level revealing the artist's intention even more. When Bell says that it would be almost impossible for an artist to concentrate his energies to achieve his object if he does not set himself a task no more definite than that of creating significant form, without conditions or limitations material or intellectual, 'creating significant form' here is an 'intention', a big intention.

There is also one more thing that can reshape our view of intention. Even Bell, the advocate of significant form, is fully aware that the so-called pure arts in too abstract

and intangible forms, or in forms that cannot be named anyway, always meet with no response, for no one knows what such works of art try to say. Therefore, even Bell suggests that when artists have made something really difficult and intricate, they should give their readers some clue or guidance:

> Nevertheless, when an artist makes an intricate design, it is tempting and, indeed, reasonable, for him to wish to provide a clue; and to do so he has only to work into his design some familiar object, a tree or a figure, and the business is done. Having established a number of extremely subtle relations between highly complex forms, he may ask himself whether anyone else will be able to appreciate them. (Ref. 3, p. 224)

So far, we can safely arrive at the following conclusions: no matter what kind of arts, no matter what form of arts, the intention due to which arts are created, or texts put down, is always there; the intention flows through the whole process of the artistic creation, penetrating every detail. And art demands understanding and sympathy. It is actually always the 'intention' – including all the forms of expressing the intention and all the contents wrapped in forms for intention – that understanding and sympathy try to find as their object. Conclusions like these set the limits to efforts of developing and expanding the theory of 'significant form'.

4. Paper Beings

'Paper beings' is one of the influential terms devised by Roland Barthes. It contributes to his famous statement that 'the author is dead', meaning that he does not admit the existence of the author and the author's intention in the text, and that therefore arbitrary interpretation is also legitimate. In 1966, Barthes published 'An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative', which is regarded as a classical text of French structuralism. In this long academic essay, Barthes demonstrates the focus of structuralism on the semantic structure of a text, and he negates the author's intention reasoning from the question: who is the giver of a narrative? To this question, Barthes says that three conceptions seem to have been formulated in his time. The first takes the view that all the narrative emanates from a person whom others normally call 'the author'. The second is a kind of impersonal and omniscient consciousness, 'that tells the story from a superior point of view, that of God'.[4] The third says that the givers are the characters in the narrative each in turn, for a narrator must limit his or her story to what the characters can observe or know.

To Barthes, all three conceptions are inadequate. He says that from the viewpoint of structuralism and semiology, the narrator and characters are essentially 'paper beings', and the (actual) author of a narrative is no way to be confused with the narrator of that narrative. He emphasizes that structural analysis is unwilling to accept the assumption that 'makes the author a full subject and the narrative the instrumental expression of that fullness' (Ref. 4, p. 111). Since Barthes defines the narrator and the characters in a text as 'paper beings', and they bear no necessary correspondence to the author in real life, including the latter's intention, the author's intention is therefore dissolved. Barthes pushes his structuralism even further to say that all narratives are signs and the outcome of the signs' auto-organizing activities.

The rules of narrative organize not only the discourse of the text, reflected as the arrangements of signs, but also the meaning of the text. Therefore, the most important purpose of literary interpretation is not to disclose things such as the referential meanings of the text, the author's intention, and the readers' response, but to disclose the deep organizing rules of signs and the basic 'grammars' of narratives, that is to explore the semiotic system – its organization and mechanism. So far it seems that Barthes has provided us with a perfect theoretical framework, but still we are left with questions.

The first question is whether the author's intention does not exist in the text after all. No matter how we position the author, his or her work – the text – is a concrete object, with the author's name attached to it and it remains so in the world. We always connect *King Lear* and *Hamlet* to Shakespeare, and explore his possible writing intention or purpose, because he is the acknowledged author of the texts. If we accept the idea that what the author thinks is not related to what he writes, and what he writes is not related to the stories and characters in his text, and that what the author thinks and writes is not related to the discourse and spiritual meanings of the text, then, can we still say that texts such as *Hamlet* are the objectification of spiritual things? I never doubt the simple fact that literary works are the outcome of writers' thoughts. It is the writer who has created his or her written products, following his or her own ideas and designs. Even Roland Barthes, so strongly against the existence and significance of the author's intention and openly proclaiming that 'the author is dead', once said that 'It is because writing derives from a meaningful gesture of the writer', but this statement of his has always been neglected.[5]

We can gather much information from this utterance. First, Barthes regards writing as a gesture, an action taken by the writer as a subject. Second, this gesture should be meaningful. The meaning of writing is related to what is written here and how. At least two standards are involved in deciding meaning: one is whether the writing can be read, for those that cannot be read are meaningless things; the other is whether the writing can be understood, for if the contents and forms cannot be understood, there would be the same meaninglessness. Third, the expression – 'derives from gesture' – means that texts are the products of certain actions. As the gesture (actions) of writing continues, a text displays itself. You may stop for a while when you are reading, 'eyes looking upwards', but you cannot stop writing yet meanwhile still be able to go on producing texts (Ref. 4, p. 22). The contradiction between such statements and Barthes' affirmation that 'the author is dead' proves that intention plays a fundamental role in literary creation and cannot be dissolved.

Style is also an important aspect of form. The structuralism of Barthes says it is because of the virtue of an intention to be poetry that modern poetry finds styles, and it is the authority of a writer's style that places him or her above history. Is it the flesh (mainly the author's flesh) that decides the style? Or has it to be through 'the intention' that the flesh decides the style? Either way, the author and the author's intention are the source of style. In view of such a connection, can we still say the narrator and characters, who have realized the author's intention and style, are only beings on paper?

The second question concerns how signs are organized into texts. According to structuralism, narratives are in essence the result of semiotic activity, which has its own organizing rules, and literary works are produced both under the guidance and within the limits of these rules. The essential task of narratology is to identify the grammar-like auto-organizing rules of the signs underlying deep narrative activity, instead of the objective world of the narrative or the motives and intention of the author's writing. To this positioning of criticism by structuralism, we both agree and disagree. On the one hand, we agree that language is signs in a certain sense, and any autonomous text should be a close but complete semiotic system. Semiotic analysis should and can be scientific by studying various kinds of texts, including literary texts of course, to find rules. We also agree that language, or the semiotic system, indeed has rules for distribution and integration, and if we want to make a sensible text, we have to arrange the signs and codes in accordance with the semiotic rules. Arbitrary usage of signs and violation of common rules are normally not accepted. But, on the other hand, we shall not forget to question all this again from this perspective: who is, after all, organizing the signs, the composing elements of texts? Can signs really integrate and distribute automatically? Since writing derives from a meaningful gesture of the writer, hasn't the hand operating signs plans, designs and speculations before and in the process of operating signs? We think it self-evident that writing is a kind of rational activity, and writers write with their mind and consciousness, both guided and restricted by rules of logic. Writing is also a conscious activity, in which consciousness actively participates in constructing meaning. So once this conscious activity starts, it insistently moves towards the intention of the consciousness, from the design of the beginning to the arrangements of various details of the texts. During the course of writing, the writer might be emotionally out of control, or lost in his reverie. But even so, the rationality of writing should always be back there, guiding the writing process or drawing the writing process back to the home of rationality. Writing should be oriented by rationality and codes and signs can construct coherent meanings only within the scope of rationality. No doubt, we human beings need language to present to the others what is in our mind and in our consciousness. Whoever one is, so long as one uses common and tangible language to communicate with others and to express one's thoughts and consciousness, one should at least guarantee that the object one refers to in language be in accordance with the object one's thinking refers to in one's mind, and the meaning of one's language be in accordance with the meaning emanated from one's consciousness. Linguistic expression and conscious activity are intertwined and inseparable. Human consciousness can only be expressed in human language; and no human language is spoken without human consciousness behind it. The same interwoven relationship applies to signs on paper, since we all agree that signs on paper are the representation of language.

E. Edmund Husserl's theory of intentionality examines the activities of intention in linguistic activities. By 'the sense-fulfilling acts', Husserl refers to the complex activity of intentionality, of setting up the connections among sounds, meanings, perception and intention.[6] According to Husserl's philosophy, both the audio signs and written

signs of language are connected to meanings and concepts connected to judgements. All these connections are fulfilled through the activity of intentionality. When people are intentionally using some expressions to voice their thoughts, they are fulfilling their specific meanings. Or we might say they are using rationality to do 'the sense-fulfilling acts'. Such acts, out of rationality and with intentionality, empower the words or signs on paper, give them meanings and set up concrete relations between the words and the object. From this perspective, the paper beings created by narratives do not just exist on paper, self-referentially. Whichever name we use to describe them, the characters in a narrative, with their voices, are out of the narrator's contemplation and representation, and this narrator – considering the relationship between consciousness and writing – embodies the intention of the one who is writing, just this one, not somebody else. The one who is writing is the author, he or she who has been kept in darkness by mainstream twentieth century literary criticism.

Now, the third question: how does the intention control writing? For this question, plenty of theories have been put forward from different fields of the human sciences, such as philosophy, linguistics, literature, and so on, over the past 100 years. Different theories bring different attitudes and standpoints; some are in sharp contrast with one another. We find statements such as 'meaning should be in meaning-intention'; or 'the narrative technique is impressionistic: it breaks up the signifier into particles of verbal matter which make sense only by coalescing'.[7] We hold it true that from the thousands of years of human history with literature in it, we can see that, no matter how literary languages or texts could be broken into pieces and reconstructed, writing is perpetually a conscious activity made by human beings. It is the writer who is speaking and listening. Shall we look at a classical literary work as a semiotic system? Yes, surely we can look at it from that angle. But this angle will by no means make us deny that the author's writing consciousness and his or her intention constitute the real source of writing activity. Signs and codes are comparatively 'dead', while consciousness and intention are 'living'. It is the living consciousness and intention that give signs and codes 'lives' and meanings. Although among signs there are rules of auto-organization, signs cannot actively take actions to really organize themselves into texts. Random piling-up of signs is meaningless. Meaning comes into signs only when the writer deliberately organizes them, following semiotic rules, arranging signs with consciousness. And one more thing, the realized meaning envelops the writer's intention within. Here I would like to refer to a passage from Husserl,

> The articulate sound-complex, the written signs, etc., first becomes a spoken word or communicative bit of speech, when a speaker produces it with the intention of 'expressing himself about something' through its means; he must endow it with a sense in certain acts of mind, a sense he desires to share with his auditors. Such sharing becomes a possibility if the auditor also understands the speaker's intention. He does this inasmuch as he takes the speaker to be a person, who is not merely uttering sounds but speaking to him, who is accompanying those sounds with certain sense-giving acts, which the sounds reveals to the hearer, or whose sense they seek to communicate to him. (Ref. 6, p. 189)

Of course, theories are grey and their vitality depends on whether they can pass the trials of literary practice. Maybe it is preferable to look to the classical creative writers and how they conceive of writing. We will see whether they are aware, or fully aware, of their intention in their writing, and whether they lay out their intention with consciousness in the course of writing. Especially in writings such as stream of consciousness, it is supposed that scribbling without purpose or intention could also realize literary meanings. Since it is supposed in this writing that hidden under the surface narrative there could be some uncommon ways of narrating stories, we can of course take stream of consciousness as a good example to consider disputes regarding denying and dissolving the so-called intention and treating the 'intention' as intention in vain. What are the classical writers' answers? *Ulysses* is a classical stream-of-consciousness work. Using this writing technique, James Joyce grasps what is going on in his characters' minds: thoughts or dreams, inconsistent, unstable, infinite and whimsical. The difficulty of reading the book challenges its readers. Is Joyce's stream of consciousness careless scribbling or random gatherings of signs and words? Or is his work a verbal laying out of his careful and purposeful design? Obviously not. In this sense, I should say that whatever technique the author uses, the author has in mind a definite idea, although it might develop and change along with the development of the plot, which can find embodiment in almost all the great literary masters in the world.

5. Conclusion

There is one thing I feel compelled to stress in my concluding part. It is that contemporary science itself does not embark on the wrong road of subjectivism and relativism just because it laid too much emphasis on the importance of the subject. Contemporary science also bears no responsibility for the 'subversive' arguments in contemporary hermeneutics and literary criticism mentioned above. Although the impact of scientism does exist, deeds such as denying and dissolving the author's intention, exaggerating the ideal of zero degree writing, expecting writers to write with zero degree participation, and advocating the state of non-individuality in writing, are all showing clearly that many hermeneuticians and critics have only superficially adopted or accepted some methods and ideas from the sciences, and there are many more misunderstandings than understandings in their borrowings from contemporary science. While contemporary science is striding forwards, keeping to the path of respecting scientific laws, hermeneutics and literary criticism have gradually plunged into the wrong road of relativism and nihilism, through their practice of unrestrictedly emphasizing the subject's significance and enhancing the subject's interpretive position. The result, in literary studies, is the popularity of literary theories void of literature, literary studies short of concrete object, and literary reviews detached from texts. It is not at all surprising that the phenomenon of imposed interpretation, that is interpretation centred on theories, has become peculiar to contemporary hermeneutics and literary criticism.

However, writers' intelligence should never be underestimated. Literary theorists should quit their too-ready self-confidence of feeling their own understanding and

interpretation are superior, while the authors' intention and creation are deemed inferior. We appreciate the following passage from Roland Barthes, although it sounds not much like his normal proposals:

> A language and a style are blind forces; a mode of writing is an act of historical solidarity. A language and a style are objects; a mode of writing is function: it is the relationship between creation and society, the literary language transformed by its social finality, form considered as a human intention and thus linked to the great crises of History. (Ref. 5, p. 14)

My conclusion is that the author's intention *is* there; the intention is there, lurking between the lines of the text like an invisible spirit; the author's intention can greatly influence the text and the reader's interpretation of the text. As a reader, you have the right to give your imagination full play and have your own reading and your personal interpretation. However, you should not replace the author's intention with your bold imagination and associations, and even move forward to deny the author's being. During the process of the text's writing and development, the author does not impose their works on their readers. The author just puts down what he or she wants to put down, which is their understanding and knowledge about life, the world, and so on. The author normally takes a generous attitude to other people's interpretation of his or her work, meeting the readers' comments in silence. Since the author's texts are already finished and laid out, generally speaking the author does not feel so much the need for self-defence. In the case of classical works, of course, the authors quite probably have already passed away and have no chance of defending themselves any more. It is we, the readers, who always impose our understanding on the author. We are so sure that our understanding leads to the real intention of the text and that we even know the text better than its author. Such an economy is 'imposed interpretation', leading to arbitrary interpretation and interpretive hegemony. We shall try to withdraw that kind of arbitrariness and return to a dialogic position with the text and give play to a scientific spirit in our literary research. Respect the text, the author and the intention, then we will arrive at proper understanding and fair and justified interpretation of the text. This is a real scientific attitude toward the existence of the author that should be encouraged in our literary studies.

References and Notes

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