



“The rest is silence”: Readerly Wanderings in the Unsaid

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The title of this conference: “Addressing Readers” instantly brought to my mind Tristram Shandy’s and Sterne’s uninterrupted dialogue with their readers, humorously defending their most eccentric narrative choices in a playful quest for understanding and approval... Some contrary mode of thinking, and my work on the stories of a most discreet Irish author, William Trevor, then conjured up the very opposite end of the spectrum where the silent author/narrator stands, inviting readers to fill in narrative gaps and adopt necessarily unstable positions. Yet, this withdrawal into *narrathorial* silence, even reticence, paradoxically often turns out to be a most formidable manipulative strategy to direct readers from the wings of fiction and force them into perspectives tailored to writers’ desires.

To make this point, I will try and ferret out the textual signs of these silent strategies (metaphors, telescoped voices and perspectives, free styles, metalepses...). Freely drawing inspiration from Lecercle’s analyses, I shall argue that narrative elements that defy or renounce expression might be analysed as constituting an irreducible ‘remainder’ that creates a unique form of ‘interpellation’. Consenting (?) readers are thereby displaced from their points of expectation, their pre-established modes of perception. There, at the very heart of what could sometimes be analysed as *narrathorial* impoliteness, it will be argued, paradoxically rests the e-motion and the wonder of reading. Examples will be mainly drawn from contemporary Irish fiction.

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