

WHO THEN IS SPEAKING?

“the preliminary condition of any work of literature is that the person who is writing has to invent that first character – the author of the work... the author’s name and the various ‘I’s’ that go to make up the ‘I’ who is writing”

-Italo Calvino-

“‘I’ can only be identified by the instance of speech which contains it, and by that alone”

-Emile Benveniste-

“Who, then, is speaking?”

-Maurice Blanchot-

who is speaking:

I am the one, come to tell the story, the code of information and words, with letters and gestures and some touches of inflection, but I mean to tell it straight and impartially, save the parts I must needs factor in.

who is writing:

And I am the one, come to present the speech in images – to sketch, doodle, scrawl and scribble – marks and letters and symbolic dashes and curves, points and curls in order that you might decode, perceive and interpret the messages of speaker, silent though you both may be, with all of us reading what we each are choosing to see.

who is reading:

we, all of us, some before the text is made, some almost simultaneous with it, others far along and away, ingesting quite similar physical marks and gestures, each in our own way through our various individual-minds, group-minds, cultures, vocabularies, languages and eras. In other words, nothing stays the same, and everything is alike in this. We read, re-marking the text.

who is not-writing:

I am capable of inscribing in my mind and body, the world. As if an invisible typing-machine, a reordering recorder, some receptive-creator-genius, as it were, a super-computer which you are incapable of judging for yourself, as each to our own mechanisms, susceptibilities, senses and necessary wiring. Humana/inhumana – therein lies the distinctives, do not doubt it. I am known by my knowing.

who is not-speaking:

Therefore I do not tell, have no voice of my own but merely exist to compile and report, as if I were a memory file tabbed for all occasions. I absorb, alchemize and purify. I add solvents and neutralize, catalyze, in effect I am a scientist or theorist, objectively observant as I play in my private lab. Whereof I do not know I cannot speak, and results

are eternally forth-coming, each instant a universe of new, each moment a rearrangement of all the parts in an ever-altering and incomplete whole...my lips are sealed.

who is not-reading:

[the non-readers, alas, are unable to report or tell. Our theories include the “supernova” and “black holes;” however, some have suggested to add in this category “blind faith practitioners,” “idealists,” “atheists,” – actually all –isms and –ologies, but given their abilities to say and to write and/or gesture their positions, “non-reader” would have to be distorted to incorporate “those who read in only one way”] –editors note

who is speaking:

“and like I said, ‘it began,’ he said, ‘this way: she turned the corner in a frenzy of hurry, skirt twirling this way and that, clop-clop of pumps, some windy vibration to her flesh,’ which corresponds very neatly to the moment I heard him exclaim, (he who I’m speaking of), and forthwith interviewed concerning the commotion, sitting (as he was), on the bench in the park, with such a beautiful female, I had thought, at the time I approached him, given the apparent accident of noise fomenting beneath my window”

who is writing:

wrote

who is reading:

is a little confused by the pronouns. The speaker apparently involved in the he-she story that he tells, but is the *she* also the beautiful female or some other rushing one? *He* being the same as *exclaimed* and sweated on the bench? Am I reading this right?

who is writing:

I write it as I hear it, with the proviso of necessary adjustments, corrections and expansions to concoct a sensible array of language, given current grammatical and syntactic preferences of the culture at large and my own personal tastes. Not that I actually “hear” it, as it were, more as if I see it occurring on the page where my hand is making marks, deriving setting, speech, movement and character from the silent leak of pen, like reading perhaps, a proto-reading of sorts, replete with imaged-in (image-ined?) activity, not physical, of course, save insofar as my hand and parts of my arm make a sort of jittery movement in utilizing the pen, but, well, is that any clearer? Helpful in any way?

who is reading:

am I supposed to know all that? I picked this up engage a story, a motion-picture-in-words type of thing, *not* a movie with commentary and special-effects how-tos; I’m very uncertain as to what’s actually going on here – am I to believe I’m encountering a work of someone’s imagination that I might while away some hours of my life participating in, thereby stimulating my own? Or is this some sort of step-by-step author-diary phenomenological-literary inquiry, with which I have no concern or interest whatsoever?

who is writing:

Where does the reader fit in? (a marginal note)

who is speaking:

“so he says to me, I mean, I’m just sitting here enjoying a beautiful Spring day on my favorite perch in the local park with this incredible girl I finagled to my side with brilliant hubris and aesthetic chatter, just sensing the verdant nearness of her, knowing that just beneath that thin satiny-cotton her flesh continued – from her arms and knees to her chest and crotch, those virile thighs, I’m dizzy almost here – my intellect on autopilot while my senses imbibe, and this guy, this frantic frazzled business dude scurries up asking ‘What!? Is everything - ?’ ‘What’s happened? Is everyone okay?!’ and ‘What the hell is going on?!’ I bristle of course, no one likes shit instead of rain on parade day hoping for a carnival ride, and I cinch up, scowl, and I tell him, I tell this guy: ‘Sir! What *are* you talking about? Step back! Calm down! Breathe...then begin again, but slow it down – try to make sense!’ demonstrating my world-wizened calm and strong fearless demeanor to the steaming body right there up next to me – I’d picked the half-bench with a patch of sun so we’d necessarily be close and she’d need remove her sweater-shawl thingy – I wanted the curve of her shoulder, slight swell of the breast, and neck and jawline all around, the way her hair chose so many intricate ways to secretly touch her skin”

who is reading:

Wait. So the guy telling the story *isn't* the observer of the action? Or did you forget to switch scenes or something? I mean, I guess we are in the park now on a bench reeking with sensuality, you’ve brought me closer to the lady, but truly – *who* then, is speaking?

who is writing:

(seems readers have so much to say) [that, in parenthesis further along the side of the page, ed. note]. I’d like to involve the reader(s) here, to take them into account. Who should I ask? Or should I simply re-read what I’ve written, perhaps aloud, pretend I’m someone else – not the spider’s butt spinning the web, but the focused chameleon on the next branch?

who is speaking:

“Honestly, I don’t really feel that he ‘gets it,’ most of the time? I’m not really here for the talking, you know? As if I’m a silage pile feeding the hogs of his emotions or desires, or simply raw fuel for his machines. I often feel like some objectified character or like I’m playing a role, you know? Sometimes even as flimsy and see-through as an idea! As if I’m here simply to be used. A tool, like his cock or his pen. I usually don’t let on because otherwise I’ve no way to be seen or heard, it would be like I don’t even exist if it weren’t for him. He *does* pay attention to me, as far as that goes, a careful kind of threatening interest, truth be told, but it’s cheapened because he only cares insofar as he wants (or, as he might put it – ‘needs’). I don’t know, all his ‘he said, she said, I say,

you say,' – it gets old, I get lost, and often become confused about who or what I am – this is sort of a caveat here, unscripted, I *think*, I'm just saying..."

who is reading:

[writer notes: *is speaking too*]

who is reading:

I do get a "feel," in my body, as to what's going on here. I'm hearing a lot of voices on a lot of levels and I'm trying to piece them all together – as if all the parts, *in fact*, are part of a whole – and the whole is this limited pulped object filled with typescripts that I'm holding in my hands and reading. Representational then, I guess? I reiterate: I didn't purchase this for a mirror to life, or struggles of making sense. I wasn't itching to go back to my school-days – science, philosophies – I should have ordered a film, but now I feel stuck – what with the time spent and cursory effort – I got comfortable...I almost feel duped...and yet...

who is writing:

how can you drown a baby, right? I mean, it's begun its life, it has promise and as many possibilities as the next child – rebellious, colicky, all the spit-up and shit it throws back at you – I can't just discard it, leave it to itself, it *needs* me, I think. I brought it into this world, am I also responsible to take it out when it runs amok? How the hell do you control a living thing like language? Am I the man? Wanting the girl? Questioning confusion? Discovering a traumatic event? Exclaiming?