



Narrative Double Exposure and The Gnomic Space: Authorial Ethos between Homodiegetic and Heterodiegetic Narration

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In narrative fiction, modes of consciousness representation mix narrative authority and immediate figural experience in ways that remain irresolvably ambiguous. An what is more, it is precisely this irresolvability that gives rise to some of the most central themes in novels such as illusion, deception, confession, remorse and the construction of narrative identity. For example, already the modern masterpieces such as *Madame Bovary* and *Death in Venice* challenge the entrenched narratological *idée reçue* of the categorical distinction between homo- and heterodiegetic narration, and some renowned contemporary novelists follow this same path, for example J. M. Coetzee in *Disgrace* (1999) and Michael Cunningham in *By Nightfall* (2010).

Why do the novelists choose to use the third person just when their heroes and heroines seem anxious and capable of narrativizing their own experiences by themselves? I suggest that the answer lies in the thematic potential of the narrative double exposure: the character both understands and does not understand the narrative that he or she is living through. As Derrida famously pointed out, writing signifies the absence of discursive agency. It is only in writing that we can have our hero both narrate and not narrate at the same time. This is a mode perfected by fictions that want to thematize the ultimate displacement of agency that we experience when trying to narrativize and even aestheticize the erratic flow of our lives. Furthermore, as I will argue in my talk, the unstable space between the first and the third person creates a textual locus for authorial ethos, since the characters oscillating between irrational actions and aestheticized form ultimately dramatize essential authorial concerns.

