

The Characteristics of the “Author Function”

1. Assessment of the state of the debate about authorship in the late 1960s:

- “Criticism and philosophy took notice of the disappearance – or death – of the author some time ago. But the consequences of the discovery of it have not been sufficiently examined ...” (103)
- “A certain number of notions that are intended to replace the privileged position of the author actually seem to preserve that privilege and suppress the real meaning of his disappearance.” (103)
 - The Work (103)
 - *Écriture* (104)
- “It is not enough ... to repeat the empty affirmation that the author has disappeared. ... instead we must locate the space left empty by the author’s disappearance ...” (105)

2. The Characteristics of the ‘Author Function’

- 1) Discourses are objects of appropriation. (108) (“The author function is linked to the juridical and institutional system that encompasses, determines, and articulates the universe of discourses”, 113)
- 2) Historical variability: The author function does not affect all discourses in a universal and constant way. (109)
- 3) The author function “does not develop spontaneously but as the result of a complex operation which constructs a certain rational being we call author” (110-11)
 - a. The author is “defined as a constant level of [aesthetic] value”.
 - b. The author is “defined as a field of conceptual or theoretical coherence”.
 - c. The author is “conceived as a stylistic unity”.
 - d. The author is “seen as a historical figure at the crossroads of a certain number of events”.
- 4) (“Does not refer purely and simply to a real individual, since it can give rise to several selves, to several subjects”, 113)

3. Foucault’s Overall Project: Discourse Analysis

Foucault wants to establish “questions like these: What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where has it been used, how can it circulate, and who can appropriate it for himself? What are the places in it where there is room for possible subjects? Who can assume these various subject functions?” (120)