

The Hidden Author

In defining "What is an author?", Michel Foucault seems to impose from the very beginning the fact that the author has disappeared. He does not bother to get into any discussion about it since it was, according to Foucault, a common conclusion that had been for a considerable time annoverated by literature criticism. He, himself cuts any possible criticism to this assumption, which is at the base of his following arguments, by quoting Becket and a general feeling which is however much criticizable and belongs to a particular 'mood' definable geographically within the more Westernized countries and a particular genre such as that of writing which seems however in a crisis, with the rising of other means of expression such as film, which media had brought about up to that time. Without then looking outside such very limited domain, and without acknowledging this fact but rather partially and only towards the end (there also only mentioning traditional media such as painting), Foucault goes on writing about the ways in which we are hindered to think about the author (namely because of the way we conceive his work and writing) and later attempts to account the functions of the author. It is not until the end that he dares to spill his poison against the perception we generally have about the author as a genius, forecasting the absolute disappearance of the author, a forecast which made him paradoxically the most referenced author in the social and human sciences, a forecast which has inspired much of this nerve-less tendency (yet what about). As he also does in his "Discourse on language", Foucault manages to however bring forward some good observations and namely the decreasing importance of the author in science and the fact that authors may have more or less repercussions as it is the case with Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. In his rather limited perspective which does not take into account the fundamental reasons why there are claims that the author has disappeared (e.g. maybe considering the fact that anyone can become an "hobby" author and the actual author do not want to mix with such popularization as considered by Walter Benjamin, Friedrich Nietzsche and Theodor Adorno or maybe analyzing actual literature where the suffocation of the author as genius in the shift from an aristocratic to a proletarian world is depicted like in Boris Pasternak "Doctor Zhivago") and or anonymous (which, thinking of recent trends in Graffiti Art, actually is a great strategy to become a super celebrity like in Banksy and Blu); these claims are given for granted making the text most irritable. Moreover he does not take in any consideration the fully opposite potential of a super-author as envisioned by, for instance Vannevar Bush in his idea of a cyborg like scientist.

Roger Chartier on the contrary provides in *The Order of Books*, a broader studies of the silent art of reading rather than writing. He does so by providing several observations

inspired by his analysis of the Bibliotheque Bleue, as for instance the fact that such a popularized literature is in fact just a revised form of literature which was previously meant to other more elitierian classes and that such a revision has occurred by re-editing the written content into a template more pleasant and visual. Throughout his text Chartier makes a reading of the reading of reading already developed by Michel de Chertau which seems, in this respect, more straightforward and conclusive. Re-elaborating the Jesuit scholar's theory, Chartier brings about the importance of certain shifts in the way we can analyze reading such as an emphasis on how reading was meant prior the seventeenth century being mostly orally acted and latter in a time in which reading occurred in silence. He then goes on problematizing the usual division of classes and other elements which has been commonly adopted to distinguish the various communities of readers. It is only at the end of the introduction which we finally get to understand that the object of his study is actually focusing only on seventeenth century French, drastically narrowing the initial expectations, which, also from the title, might have eluded the reader to think of a far more embracing argumentation. In this respect, the book is an applied work owing much to de Chertau, an author which can, as in Foucault's observation, be adopted for further enquires as for instance Lev Manovich consideration of the Social Media templates, a proletarianization of more cultivated web based works evolving prior the corporation driven, Social Media phenomenon. Right in this phenomenon we can then reconnect to Foucault and see that the disappearance of authors of Web based works for instance, has been partially due to this corporation takeover of the Web, making everyone potential authors and imposing ready-made templates. "Real authors" are then the victims of the usual power ambitions and socially imposed structures, which in this respect makes authors very much nomadic and underground contrary to the premises of the book which wants them like sedentary farmers. As such impositions increase, "real authors" live in a diaspora, keep anonymous not to be fagocitated by these systems, becomes cult authors possibly only after their death, and this again informally, the transmission of their operandi being transmitted underground. Was Ezra Pound then more of an author as he tried to disconnect from capitalist driven countries and moving to Fascist Italy? Probably not, as he did not find the support of its leader, yet one might raise the question whether authorship do require a certain "aristocratic" state in order for it to mature.