

Sei Shōnagon Blogger





What is an Author?

Locating the author as an individual

- Author as outside and preceding the text
- The source of meaning and intention
- The text as the product of genius expressing itself in writing

This parallels our discussion of Platonism and Western metaphysics

- The metaphysics of presence
- Truth/Knowledge in Plato
- The Book/Author
- Christian parallels—God and the Word



What is an Author?

The author constitutes a **principle of unity** in writing where any unevenness of production is ascribed to changes caused by evolution, maturation, or outside influence. In addition, the author serves to neutralize the contradictions that are found in ... texts. Governing this function is the belief that there must be – at a particular level of an author's thought, of his conscious or unconscious desire – a point where contradictions are resolved, where the incompatible elements can be shown to relate to one another...

Michel Foucault



The Author-Function

Archaeologists of discourse

- Examine clusters of statements, layers of discourse
- Examine the conditions for existence of configurations of statements (rather than pre-existing meanings and intentions)
- Strip the subject (and its substitutes) of its creative role and analyze as a complex and variable function of discourse
- Writing reverses its role from being derivative, imitative to being primary and originary

Materialities of the Text

- Agreements about appearance, format, fonts, paper, etc., in the production and distribution of books
- Points to the existence of a system for production and circulation of the text
- Modes of remuneration—review—appreciation



The Author-Function

The author-function is characteristic of the mode of existence, circulation, and function of certain discourses in society

- Certain discourses are endowed with an author function, others are not
- Not every discourse can be accorded the status of being the product of an author
- “Author” is a position that defines a subject in a discourse network rather than a quality inherent in an individual, for instance, “Shakespeare”



The Author-Function

From these (archaeological) premises it follows that:

- The form, complexity, even the existence of the author-function is highly mutable
- We can imagine a culture where discourse could circulate without an author
- Discourses of whatever value or status could unfold in anonymity



The Author-Function

No longer the questions:

- Who is the *real* author?
- Have we proof of his authenticity and originality?
- What has he revealed of his most profound self in his language?



The Author-Function

Instead these questions are replaced by:

- What are the modes of existence of this discourse?
- Where does it come from; how is it circulated; who controls it?
- What positions are determined for possible subjects?
- Who can fulfill these diverse functions of the subject?

At the basis of all this: What does it matter *who* is speaking?

Is Sei Shōnagon an Author?

Sei Shōnagon a diarist or an author?

- Creating a new form
- Court life where emphasis placed on writing and poetry
- Women as writers and masters of hiragana
- lack of access to formal Chinese learning enabled women to play key role in developing native Japanese literary style



古事記上卷 并序

臣安萬侶言。夫、混元既凝、氣象未レ效。無レ名無レ爲。誰知^二其形。然、乾坤初分、參神作^二造化之首、陰陽斯開、二靈爲^二神祖。所以、出^レ入幽顯、日月彰^二於洗^レ目、浮^レ沈海水、神祖^二是於滌^レ身。故、太素杳冥、因^二本教^二而識^二孕^レ土產^レ嶋之時、綿邈、賴^二先聖^二而察^二生^レ神立^レ人之世。寔知、懸^レ鏡吐^レ珠、而百王相續、喫^レ劍切^レ蛇、以萬神蕃息與。議^二安河^二而平^二天下^二、論^二小濱^二而清^二國土。是以、番仁岐命、初降^二于高千嶺、神倭天皇、

Sino-Japanese,
from Kojiki

【九】 うへにさぶらふ御猫は、かうぶりにて命婦のおとどとて、いみじうをか
しければかしづかせ給ふが、はしにいでてふしたるに、乳母の馬の命婦、あな
まさなや。入り給へ」とよぶに、日のさし入りたるに、ねぶりてゐたる
どすとて、「翁丸、いづら。命婦のおとどくへ」といふに、まことか
ものははしりかかりたれば、おびえまどひて御簾のうちに入りぬ。
朝餉のおまへに、うへおはしますに、御覽じていみじうおどろかせ給ふ。猫
を御ふところに入れさせ給ひて、をのことも召せば、藏人忠隆、なりな
たれば、「この翁丸うちてうじて、犬島へつかはせ。ただいま」とおほせらるれ

Sei Shōnagon's
writing

Death of the Author



- Readerly and Writerly Texts

The writerly text is a perpetual present, upon which no *consequent* language (which would inevitably make it past) can be superimposed; the writerly text is *ourselves writing*, before the infinite play of the world (the world as function) is traversed, intersected, stopped, plasticized by some singular system (Ideology, Genus, Criticism) which reduces the plurality of entrances, the opening of networks, the infinity of languages. (*S/Z*, 5)

The goal of literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text (*S/Z*, 4).

From Weblogs to Blogs

- Weblogs existed prior to 1998 but got going in a big way in 1999 with the launch in July of Pitas and in August of Blogger—free tools for creating weblogs
- Blogs—personal diaries that are not filters of public news started with Blogger in 1999

Are Bloggers Authors?

"Media is a corporate possession... You cannot participate in the media. Bringing that into the foreground is the first step. The second step is to define the difference between public and audience. An audience is passive; a public is participatory. We need a definition of media that is public in its orientation."

Should Bloggers Become Authors?

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