

How does an authorial identity develop?

By

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Barthes theorises that an authorial identity develops once the creation leaves the ‘creators’ domain and infiltrates the audience’s realm of understandings. This constructs superfluosity around an author’s position. The consideration of thought by the audience then creates an authorial identity concerning the ‘creation’ they have just experienced. (Barthes) Michel Foucault views that the “notion of the author” (Foucault) establishes an “individualisation in the history of conceptualisations” (Foucault) no matter the form an authorial creator or creation takes.

Giving credence to Barthes ideology concerning the “death of the author” (Barthes) and, holding the view that from creator to creation, is the only participation by ‘the’ author, it is justifiable to say that the end user of the ‘creation’ holds power over it and over the author who created it. Foucault also questions authorial identity and hypothesises upon the sociohistorical facets of this ‘new’ identity of the author. ‘When did the focus of the ‘creation’ alternate into a focus upon the ‘creator.’’ (Foucault)

When the name Jean-Paul Sartre is bandied about, his phenomenological ontology essay, “Being and Nothingness,” (Sartre) springs to mind. It is an expectation of great works waiting to be unravelled and Sartre’s authorial identity becomes a desirable anticipation as a result. Sartre delivers contemplations, new discoveries and riddles to be uncovered. The works of this great theorist and, other French theoreticians, shine above the usual mainstream individuals. Their ideas are fresh and moveable; there is room to enhance their creations.

These expectations of French theoreticians are a result of their creations with the ideology of the creator being a by-product of their creation. Sartre’s creations are exceptional in that his creations must be studied to gain the full impact of what the creation is delivering. “Being and Nothingness’ is a poetic genius with informative factors just waiting to be unravelled. The genius behind Sartre’s writing is that the creator has ensured that time must be taken to uncover the creation, it is very hard to simply flick through Sartre’s essay as it secures the attention of its audience until an understanding of its brilliance is uncovered.

These expectations of French theoreticians are born of participation with their creations. Their creations as great and due to this greatness induce the audience to follow through and seek out more creations by that particular creator. Therefore, this presentation reveals that Barthes ideological theory concerning the 'Death of the Author,' is an accurate representation of authors whose creative abilities are natural extensions of themselves. Being unique entities, this presentation also establishes credence to that which Foucault states as being; "A privileged moment of Individualisation in the history of ideas." (Foucault). However true this representation of authorial identity, it is not true of all authorial identities.

Some creator's possess a dominant motivator around the creation of their Art. One motive could be for fame and money. This theory is both "theoretical and technical" (Foucault) in that in theory the authorial identity is still that of a creator, but technical actions are put in place to ensure success. A "capitalist ideology attaches the greatest importance to the 'person' of the author." (Barthes) Another type of authorial identity is that of unwitting fame and success. It is not too often that a 'creator' of this type achieves abundance and celebrityhood from their creations. Most creators of this ilk create because it is who they are, not what they do. Therefore, when fortune crosses their paths due to one of their creations, they may choose a pseudonym rather than place themselves in the spotlight, as this is where they are most comfortable.

This presentation has addressed the concept of 'authorial identity,' and how such an identity might develop. It has utilised three French theorists: Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault and Jean-Paul Sartre, to examine the growth of an 'authorial identity,' and what type of creator could correspond with the theories noted in the creations of these authors. From author to art it goes out into the world for examination. Should the art impress the spectator then the author may be placed before the art, but the art enters the world on its own and attracts to itself admirers. The author has already moved on and begun a new creation

Bibliography

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