
**Essay/Argument Outline**

1. Responds to criticism
2. Wants to write about: “the functional conditions of specific discursive practices” (114)
3. Here: the singular relationship between author and text (115)
4. Two principles of “contemporary writing” (poststructuralism/poetics):
   a. texts are interplay of signs (116); see Derrida
   b. writing “kills” the author (116-117); see Barthes
5. We have NOT yet considered the full implications of the death of the author; two themes that have not been explored enough stand out:
   a. the concept of “the work”
   b. the concept of “écriture;” see Barthes, the author as “scriptor”
6. The difficulties with using authors’ names; what are proper names? Two different models in circulation:
   a. everyday language; proper name designates a real individual (122)
   b. in the context of writing/literature; author does not designate a real individual but is used as a function--as a way to structure how we speak about texts (122-124)
7. Further development of 6b: what does it mean to think of the author as a function of discourse? What are the characteristics of such a discourse? Next, he will examine FOUR features of such a discourse that has to do with texts/authors:
   7.1 “Authors” are objects of ownership and punishment (124-125)
   7.2 The “author-function” is not universal or constant in all discourse; in the past, texts we now call literary circulated without being tied to an “author;” scientific texts also do not use an “author-function” like literary texts do (125-127 top)
   7.3 The “author-function” was developed in a complex operation; literary criticism took as its model the Christian tradition, whereby a text is seen as valuable if its author is shown to be “holy,” or somehow a genius, a highly talented individual (127-129). Here, this development generally has followed the model set forth in Christianity by Saint Jerome; in literature this model has four elements (author has basic, unchanging viewpoints; if there are changes in his/her work, those changes are external; the author always can be shown to be above any contradictions found in his/her texts; the author’s fundamental beliefs are evident in ALL his/her texts)
7.4 texts with authors show a series of textual signs that point to a complex manifestations of “the author:” a text is said to have an author, a writer, and a narrator --> all three elements show the function of an “author,” dispersed simultaneously in any given piece of “literature” (129-130)

8. Paragraph in lower half of page (“Further elaboration would....”) constitutes a SUMMARY of point 7; Foucault reviews the four points he just mentioned (130).

9. Development of point 7: what does it mean to consider the “author-function” in discourses other than the literary context? How does the “author-function” play out for a discipline or a theory? Overall point: the 19th century in Europe produced an “author” who becomes the designation of an entire approach or discipline: case in point are Freud and Marx. The function of “Freud” and “Marx” established the possibility of entire categories of discourse (131-134); implications:
   a. the validity of a statement is defined in relation to the work of the initiator (Freud and Marx) (134-135)
   b. other developments in these disciplines can always be traced back (“returned to”) the initiators and their originary texts (135-136)
   c. these returns to the initiators and to their texts serves to further support the link between the author and his works (136).

10. Last paragraph on p. 136: summary of points 7 and 9: the “author-function” is complex and different at the level of a book or a group of texts (point 7) and at the level of larger entities such as disciplines (point 9).

11. How should we study texts (with a poetics/poststructural perspective of “author-function in mind)? Answer: we need to look at discourse by way of a historical/genealogical analysis (137): the mode of existence of texts, “the modifications and variations, within any culture, of modes of circulation, valorization, attribution, and appropriation” (137). Also part of this analysis: an investigation of the role and development of the concept of the subject as a part of the function of discourse. --> think about how Alvarez shows that identity comes from a relation to language; similarly, the subject emerges as a concept of language and in language.

12. Overall: the concepts of the author and the subject are “far from immutable (138): in other words, Foucault’s shows how our notions of authors and texts are NOT fixed but rather emerge within cultural changes. Our notions, thus, are NOT truth but rather conventions and artificial constructs.