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Author

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In common usage the term "author" applies to a wide range of activities. It can refer to someone who starts up a game, or invents a machine, or asserts political freedom, or thinks up a formula, or writes a book. Depending on the activity and the application, the term can connote initiative, autonomy, inventiveness, creativity, authority, or originality. A common procedure whereby an anonymous agent turns into an individual binds the term to these different activities.

In turning anyone in general into someone in particular, the term "author" carries along with its common usage some long-standing debates over what is at stake in this transformation. These debates have continued over centuries and have taken place with different emphases in different fields. But certain questions, no matter whether they were asked by politicians, economists, theologians, philosophers, or artists, remained constant. Is an individual self-determined or determined by material and historical circumstances? Is the human self infinite or finite? Can an individual ground political authority on individual creativity? What is the basis for human freedom? Can any artist claim absolute originality?

These questions as well as different cultures' responses to them have accompanied the term from its inception. The variety of these responses constitutes the meaning of the term. Like other items that answer to a variety of applications, "author" will sometimes sanction utterly contradictory usages. At the time of its inception, for example, the word "author" was used interchangeably with its predecessor term "auctor," which did not entail verbal inventiveness, as "author" did but the reverse—adherence to the authority of cultural antecedent. A good way to sort out the various, sometimes contradictory, meanings of this term might be by way of historical narrative. Like most historical narratives, this one will cover an immense trajectory of time in a short space. Consequently, only the broad outlines of its historical development will become apparent. And only some of the questions which have shaped that development will be addressed.

Another question and the contemporary debate surrounding it will provide a

conclusion to this brief narrative. Is the "author" dead? The question was asked by Roland Barthes in an essay "The Death of the Author," a title which presumes the answer. But Michel Foucault disagreed with this answer and wrote an essay "What Is an Author?" which raises in the terms of recent continental criticism some of the issues addressed in the following narrative. Because their debate recapitulates and advances those issues, a discussion of its implications for the continued usage of the term will conclude the history.

The idea of authorship has a lengthy and somewhat problematic genealogy. From the beginning this genealogy has been associated with that of a related figure, the individual "subject." Unlike other works referring to a writer's activity—such as essayist, or poet, or dramatist—the term "author" raises questions about authority and whether the individual is the source or the effect of that authority. The word "author" derives from the medieval term *auctor,* which denoted a writer whose words commanded respect and belief. The word *auctor* derived from four etymological sources: the Latin verbs *agere,* "to act or perform"; *auieo,* "to tie"; *augere,* "to grow"; and from the Greek noun *autentim,* "authority." In the Middle Ages every discipline in the *trivium* had *auctores* (Cicero in rhetoric, Aristotle in dialectic, the ancient poets in grammar) and similarly in the *quadrivium* (Ptolemy in astronomy, Constantine in medicine, the Bible in theology, Boethius in arithmetic) (see Minnis 1984, 1–73). *Auctores* established the founding rules and principles for these different disciplines and sanctioned the moral and political authority of medieval culture more generally. Over the centuries the continued authority of these founding figures derived from medieval scribes' ability to interpret, explain, and in most cases resolve historical problems by restating these problems in terms sanctioned by *auctores.*

Such restatements commanded authority because they organized otherwise accidental events into an established context capable of making them meaningful. The continued authority to make events meaningful in customary or traditional ways provided all the evidence necessary to sustain the *auctores'* power. In the Middle Ages, the relationship between these authoritative books and the everyday world was primarily an allegorical one. Worldly events took place in terms sanctioned by an authoritative book or were not acknowledged as having taken place at all. To experience an event in allegorical terms was to transpose the event out of the realm of one's personal life into the realm of the applicable authority. Following such a transposition, the event became impersonal—everyone's spiritual quest rather than one individual's personal biography. The benefit of this transposition for the individual was indeed a spiritual one—the ability to experience an event in one's life as a reenactment of a sacred custom. Any event, or thing, or emotion, or thought which made this transference into the realm of the *auctores* possible continued their cultural authority. Whereas individuals within medieval culture could interpret their lives in terms that elaborated or reenacted the sayings of the ancient *auctores,* only the monarch, as God's representative, could claim divine sanction for his everyday actions. By correlating the divine basis for his rule with auctorial precedents, the medieval ruler sanctioned the *auctores'* cultural authority. As the source, the beneficiary, and the agent of the culture's authoritative books, the monarch was the perfected cultural form of the *auctor.* His rule was his book, and his subjects were compelled to submit their world to the edicts of that book.

Auctorial sanction and monarchical rule remained more or less unquestioned until late in the fifteenth century, with the discovery of a New World whose inhabitants, language, customs and laws, geography, and plant and animal life did not correspond to referents in the *auctores'* books. Unlike events and persons in medieval Europe, the inhabitants and environment of the New World could *not* be explained in customary terms. Explorers could not find precedents in the work of *auctores* for what they discovered in the New World. Instead of returning to their culture's ancient books for allegorical prefigurations, many New World explorers described what they discovered by making up words of their own (or borrowing terms from the natives). One result of this breakdown was the addition to the English language of such words as hurricane, canoe, skunk; another was the loss of cultural authority for the *auctor.* A related effect was the appearance of what Renaissance historians now refer to as "new men," individuals within Renaissance culture who turned the "news" sent home from freshly discovered lands into forms of cultural empowerment for unprecedented political actions and their personification by new agents within the culture. Among these new cultural agents were "authors," writers whose claim to cultural authority did not depend on their adherence to cultural precedents but on a faculty of verbal inventiveness. Unlike the medieval *auctor* who based his authority on divine revelation, an author *himself* claimed authority for his words and based his individuality on the stories he composed.

More precisely, authors exploited the discontinuity between the things in the New World and the words in the ancient books to claim for their words an unprecedented cultural power, to represent the new. Authors rose to cultural prominence in alliance with other individuals who exploited this dissociation between worlds: explorers, merchants, colonists, traders, reformers, and adventurers. Like all these other "new" men, authors depended on what was newly discovered in the new lands as the basis for their cultural authority. The new lands were the source of news, and the news facilitated social mobility and cultural change. The recognition of what was new depended on an acknowledgment of the inadequacy of allegory as the source of cultural knowledge. Whereas medieval allegory subsumed a culture's persons and their actions—no matter how various or qualified—within its unchanging typologies, what was new asserted its difference from, rather than its correspondence with, these cultural typologies. By inventing new words to describe things in the New World, authors declared their right to be represented on their own terms rather than in the

words of the ancient books. And their writings produced readers who also learned how to define themselves in their own terms.

From the fifteenth century through the first half of the twentieth century, the term "author" enjoyed a more or less constant rise in social prestige. The beneficiary of the esteem that cultures had previously bestowed on their *auctores,* the author and his work signified a break from the cultural constraints imposed by feudal kings. Authors maintained this affiliation with cultural freedom through the creation of alternative worlds wherein individual human subjects could experience the autonomy denied them in their cultural world.

This rise to cultural prominence of the author was correlated from the beginning with the *auctores'* fall. Like the autonomous human subject, the author was an emergent political and cultural category, which was initially differentiated from the culturally residual category of the *auctor* as an example of *self*-determination. The author guaranteed the individual's ability to determine his own identity and actions out of his own experiences in a culture he could reform rather than endorsing the auctorial aim of transcending culture.

The *auctor* based his authority on divine revelation; the author derived his authority from the discovery of new worlds whose native environments contradicted the *auctores'* mandates. The *auctores* produced a culture which reproduced their mandates; authors at first produced themselves out of the alternative world-pictures they used to explain (and imaginatively inhabit) other lands.

During the years when feudal Europe was undergoing a fundamental transformation, the author was never defined apart from this process of transformation. Once the work of cultural transformation was considered complete, however, the concept of the "author" underwent a fundamental change. Having helped effect the historic change from a feudal and predominantly agricultural society and through a variety of other political and economic arrangements to a democratic and predominantly industrial Europe, the author was no longer part of an emergent cultural process. Following the realization of an alternative culture he had earlier only envisioned, the author's work underwent a related change—from a reciprocal workaday relationship with other cultural activities into the realm of "genius," which transcended ordinary cultural work.

Like the medieval *auctor,* the "genius" identified the basis for his work with the laws of the Creator. Consequently, the realm of genius was defined as utterly autonomous. Free from determination by any cultural category other than the absolutely free constructions of his creative imagination, the genius broke down the reciprocal relationship between the author and the rest of culture.

But while the genius occupied a realm that transcended culture, he nevertheless served a cultural function. As an example of the perfection that could be achieved by an inhabitant of the culture, the genius sanctioned the political authority of the culture in which he appeared. But, like the medieval *auctor,* he defined this authority as the ability to transcend the entire cultural milieu.

Whereas the author developed within the culture he helped to develop, the genius claimed to be different from the rest of the culture. So defined, the work of genius provided a politically useful contrast to other forms of labor in an industrial culture. In producing his *own* work out of materials in his own imagination, the genius performed "cultural" as opposed to "industrial" labor. Industrial workers did not control the means and product of their labor but worked with materials and produced commodities owned by someone else. In correlating nonalienated labor with his work rather than with the work of an ordinary laborer, the genius provided a tacit justification for the class distinctions separating those individuals who owned their labor from those who did not. If nonalienated labor defined the category of genius, it became a cultural privilege, a benefit accrued in the cultural realm rather than in the ordinary workaday world.

The difference between the genius who creates other, "original" worlds and the author who cooperates in the emergence of an alternative culture underscores at least two contradictory impulses the author shared from the beginning with that other emergent cultural category, the "autonomous subject." Both the author and the individual collaborated with emergent collective processes in social life. The author and the individual shared a tendency to become alienated from society once these collective social processes were fully materialized. Although associated with the more inclusive social movements that led to revolution and civil war, the author's creative work was not separable from the collective work of these social movements. Only after an emancipatory social movement succeeded in establishing an alternative form of government with its own rules of law could an author's creative efforts be dissociated from a vital collective life—as the work of a "genius." As the authoritative source of the creative life, the genius marked the return of the role of the *auctor* to the postmedieval cultural world.

To understand how the *auctor* returned, we need to recall how the *auctor* was first overthrown. The *auctor* had formerly been supplanted when the Europeans, in confronting humans they believed to be of a nature other than their own, recognized their own capacity to be other. The basis for a successful transformation in a European's nature was the discovery in the New World of natural phenomena utterly inexplicable in terms of the *auctores*. These truly alien phenomena produced an "other nature" *within* the Renaissance men who discovered them.

This "other" within ultimately became the basis for the autonomous subject. But when it made its first appearance, this "other nature" was put into service by the new men of commerce, who were able to gratify its appetites with the foodstuffs, spices, and goods brought over from the New World. The qualities in this other nature not put to commercial use led to a different form of government in Europe. Using the New World as tacit backdrop for their arguments, political theorists like Hobbes and Locke argued that man in nature was like a "savage"

in the New World. Prepolitical, protosocial, deprived of protection against an enemy, natural man required a social contract with the monarch to preserve "natural" rights and liberties.

These theories eventually led to civil wars and revolutions throughout Europe. But all of them traded on an identification within European individuals of another nature that was no longer subject to the rule of either feudal monarchs or their *auctores* but in need of an alternative European political system for its fulfillment. In its process of emergence, this new political system demanded accounts of its workings quite different from those of *auctores*.

As we have seen, the transformation of the *auctores'* models into alternative accounts of alternative worlds resulted in the appearance of authors. As long as the author was involved in the process of bringing new persons and new laws into existence, his creative powers were affiliated with a collective political imagination designed to realize a body politic that did not yet exist. It was through this collective imagination that the author addressed the other within the reading public. When the author addressed the collective imaginative capacity of Europeans to make the world they wanted out of the world they inherited, the result was revolution or civil war.

Once these civil wars succeeded in establishing alternative forms of government, the author underwent an unrelated transformation. When the author's work could no longer be correlated with an emancipatory social movement, it was defined as an emancipation from the political life. The term "genius" enabled this separation of the cultural from the political realm. As the legatee of a previous cultural identification, affiliating the *auctor*'s creative power with a founder's power to establish a city-state, the genius established a cultural realm utterly dissociated from either the political or the economic realms. He called this realm a "Republic of Letters." In this realm the works of genius recovered the authority previously exercised by medieval *auctores* and were elevated into exemplars and sources of value for the entire culture.

With the installation of the genius as the *auctor* ruling over the Republic of Letters, the author's function shifted accordingly—from that of producing an alternative political world to that of producing a cultural alternative to the world of politics. After the cultural sphere distinguished its workings from those within the different worlds of politics and economics, the cultural realm became increasingly self-referential.

During the political and industrial revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the cultural realm could not be fully distinguished from the economic and political realms. But in the twentieth century the author's genius was invoked to explain the irrelevance of economic and political issues to questions of strictly cultural interest. The genius's putative freedom from material constraints authorized this separation of the cultural from the economic realm. Following this separation, the economic, political, psychological, and historical

conditions that provided the material environment for an author's work were denied any determining relationship with it.

This separation of the cultural from the political and economic realms produced an even more fundamental division within the cultural realm, separating the author from his work. The cultural figure who supervised this division was neither the genius, nor the author, but the literary critic. Produced out of this division of labor within the cultural realm, the literary critic supervised further differentiation within the cultural realm and policed the boundaries distinguishing what was literary from what was not.

The division of cultural labor distinguishing the critic's function from the author's replicated the division of industrial labor within the economic realm. What alienated the author from his work's means of production, however, was not a factory owner but the literary critic who claimed a power to understand it greater than the author's own. The critic proved this power by interpreting the work in such a way that the author seemed an effect of the critic's interpretation rather than the cause of the work.

In an essay entitled "The Intentional Fallacy" (1954), Wimsatt and Beardsley, two American New Critics, turned the demotion of the author to a function of the critic's text into an explicit part of critical practice: "There is a gross body of life, of sensory and mental experience, which lies behind and in some sense causes every poem, but can never be and need not be known in the verbal and hence intellectual composition which is the poem." (See Wimsatt and Beardsley 1954, 12) In distinguishing the critic's text from the author's work, the New Critics successfully displaced the author's "genius" as the ruler within the cultural sphere. In the process the New Critics produced a cultural artifact, the "autotelic" or "autonomous" literary text that they defined as utterly separate from the surrounding environment. In separating the literary text from the control of the author, the New Critics only completed a movement that had begun in the cultural realm a century earlier, when the word "genius" separated the author's work from the socioeconomic world.

As the word "autotelic" text implies, the New Critics positioned their newly won texts in a realm apart from every limitation other than the rules, conventions, and constraints of a purely textual milieu. In the same postwar period in which the New Critics constructed the division separating a textual milieu from a social world, however, other critics located a critical dimension within the author's work. Instead of distinguishing the critic's work from the author, those critics using historicist, Marxist, Frankfurt school, and feminist frameworks have restored the critical dimension to the author's work, thereby linking the author and critic in a shared project. These critics returned the author's work to the social, economic, political, and gendered contexts which the New Critics separated off from their autotelic texts. In restoring the historical context to the author's works, these critics have rescinded the New Critics' claim that the genius's

texts transcend historical contexts. Their criticism turns the genius back into an individual subject, determined by the social and economic forces whose shapes he reflected or altered in his work. In analyzing the complex relationship between the market economy and what was formerly described as the "free creative play" of genius, Marxist critics in particular have restored the explicit relationship between any author's work and the anticipated reception for it. Psychoanalytic, phenomenological, and feminist critics have likewise restored crucial psychosocial contexts. In thereby turning the transcendent genius back into a culturally situated human subject, these critics have attempted to reverse some of the effects of the divisions of labor within the cultural realm. Unlike the New Critics' approach, their criticism takes place at that moment within an author's work when the author becomes critically aware of determinant social, psychological, and political forces.

These critics have restored psychosocial relationships between the author and culturally committed critics by representing the author and the critic as participants in a still-emergent social process rather than as representative figures within a fully established culture or as partial selves within a textual environment.

But these revisionist efforts have more recently been opposed by still newer critics who construe the text as isolated from every context other than a purely textual one and consider the term "author" and the history of its cultural usages to be impediments to the workings of the textual environment. Since the controversy between two of the newer critics has resulted in a consideration of the cultural value of the term "author," it will function as a conclusion to this brief narrative genealogy.

In order to separate the text from contamination by an author, such newer critics as Roland Barthes have declared the author dead. By the "author," Barthes means the demands—for psychological consistency, meaning, unity—that an autonomous subject would exact from a textual environment. In the wake of the author's death, Barthes has proposed a new definition of literature: a discursive game always arriving at the limits of its own rule, without any author other than the reader (or "scriptor" as Barthes refers to him), who is defined as an effect of the writing game he activates.

Whereas Barthes declares that the author is dead, the text he thereby produces is not without an author. In Barthes' criticism the author returns—but in the displaced form of Barthes' metatextual account of the writing activity. In this view, then, the critic is the real beneficiary of the separation of an author from a text. It is the critic rather than the author or the reader who can render an authoritative account of the structure of the work, the internal relationships among the various textual strands and levels, and the shift from author to what Barthes names "scriptor." Without the author to demand the resolution of contradictory

textual lines into an intended unity, the critic is free to reconstitute the text according to his own terms.

In an essay published one year after Barthes' "The Death of the Author," and contentiously entitled "What Is [rather than *was*] an Author," Michel Foucault reactivates the controversy between poststructuralists (who believed only in the environment of textuality) and historicists (who believed in a sociopolitical context for the literary work) over the cultural function of the author. Unlike Barthes, Foucault acknowledges the persistence of the author as a function within the commentary of poststructuralists who deny the author as agent.

To elucidate the crucial part the author continues to play in the material life of a culture, Foucault takes Barthes' "death of the author rule" as a literal ethical imperative and imagines what would happen if authors actually disappeared from culture. For one thing, there would then be no warrant for criticism. Critical language (its vocabulary of accusation, defense, judgment) depends on the legal system (and the cultural systems affiliated with it) for its warrant. Without Foucault's name to connect with the words in, say, *Les mots et les choses* there would be no one to be held accountable for them and, hence, no way to justify a critique of them (or any other commentary). The name of the author turns discourse into legal property, and the notion of legal property in turn supports and is supported by related discourses concerning entitlements, liberties, duties, rights, constraints, impediments, obligations, and punishment. The name of the author saturates the entire network of legal relations, thereby empowering the attribution of discourses to the procedures that result from them.

For Foucault, the author is finally neither an individual existing apart from a discursive practice, nor a subject acting within any specific practice, but what might be called a "subjecting" function. As the sanction for the rules within any specific practice, and as a function of the relations between them, the author for Foucault oversees and regulates all the diverse situations in which *any cultural subject* can act. Produced by the practices whose reproduction it guarantees, the name of the author turns otherwise unrelated discursive practices into a coherent cultural realm over which it maintains jurisdiction.

If the author disappeared, Foucault claims, so would the entire cultural realm under the author's jurisdiction. But Foucault postulates a different kind of author to explain figures (like Marx and Freud) whose work is discontinuous with the cultural realm. Such authors do not function within already existing discursive practices but are instead fundamental in a double sense: they found disciplines that are discontinuous with previous ones; and, unlike other cultural subjects, "fundamental" authors produce writing practices discontinuous with the practices that follow from them.

In ending his essay with a description of the fundamental author, Foucault gives his readers the appropriate way to understand his own authorship. More

interestingly for our narrative, he gives them a way to put Barthes' text to strategic cultural use. The "fundamental" author, insofar as he begins a discipline that is discontinuous with its owns rules, gratifies what Barthes describes as the fundamental impulse of the writing practice. But, unlike Barthes, Foucault's "fundamental" author does not make the mistake of turning this impulse into the normative imperative that the author "die" into this discontinuity.

This controversy between Barthes and Foucault clarifies an important function that the author plays in contemporary culture. While they both write about the author as if the term has arrived at its limits as an enabling concept, their debate returns the "author" to its relationship with another term, the "autonomous subject." The author replicates the difficulties of the cultural subject who feels as much *ruled by* as *ruler of* the writing activity in which he is situated. Barthes' solution to the subject's dilemma is the radical one of situating the subject in a discourse (the text) that brings rules *and* their ruler (the authors) to an end. Foucault exposes the rule governing this discourse, then proposes a discursive practice—that of the "fundamental" author—that will enable every subject to experience the dilemma (of feeling ruled by the discourse he should be ruling) as its own solution. In the discourse inaugurated by a "fundamental" author, every apparently derivative position a later practitioner of that discourse occupies turns out to be originative.

Foucault's "fundamental" author opens up the cultural sphere by transforming the self-referential qualities underwritten by the author into a kind of planned heterogeneity. In a sense, the "fundamental" author conflates the cultural duties of the traditional author (who initiates a new cultural practice) and the critic (who exposes the limits, inconsistencies, and unwarranted assumptions of the new practice). Insofar as he initiates both his own practice as well as the revisionary (implicitly critical) practices discontinuous with it, however, the fundamental author simply incorporates an otherwise separate *critical* discourse into his means of elaborating the internal differentiations vital to this continued cultural life of new disciplines.

Foucault's redefinition of the author has not actually introduced a new form of cultural agency for the author; in fact, it has merely restored to the author a cultural power so general in its deployment (what ongoing cultural practices cannot claim to be an activation of function discontinuous with prior practice?) and so pervasive in its effect that the work of the "fundamental" author cannot be distinguished from any other exercise of power in the cultural sphere.

Whereas Foucault intended the "fundamental" author as an alternative to the traditional author, the practices of the fundamental author only reactivate what we have already recognized as the inescapable dilemma at work in the term. Foucault's reactivation of that dilemma gives me the occasion to recapitulate the historical narrative I have been writing.

The term "author" originally arose out of the sense of constraint experienced

by the finite human subject. The authorial subject claimed the power at once to produce and to supersede those limitations. The historical result of this power was the autonomous cultural sphere. But here an imaginary scenario transpired in which the finite individual subject was instructed by the authorial subject to exclude as foreign to the cultural sphere any reminder of finitude in the form of economic, political, or material interests. When confronted with the alternative of being completely determined by material conditions, the authorial subject (as "genius") claimed the power to represent, and then find itself transparently represented in, the material conditions of human finitude. Producing in his work what previously had claimed to produce it, the authorial subject claimed the power to transcend these limitations to the subject's power and, then, along with the commentators who collaborated in the production, proved the effectiveness of this power by recognizing it in the unity, coherence, and regularity of the work of art.

The cost of the autonomy of the author's work was the separation of the socioeconomic from the textual environment and the recognition, at the time of that separation, of the conditions of textual production (rules, conventions, generic assumptions) as the only rules applicable to the text. As historicist critics have reminded us, these textual rules were themselves rarefied versions of nontextual economic and political forces. And the division of the textual from the sociopolitical realm reproduced within the text the pervasive opposition between the determining and the determined subject informing the notion of the author.

Barthes suggests one way to resolve this opposition. By identifying with the critical subject (who can articulate the rules that determine the author's moves) until that subjectivity witnesses the disappearance of the author into the writing processes that determined his work, Barthes produced a subjectivity that was effected by the activity it engaged. Determined by the process it determined, the writing self is only a textual version of what historicist critics described as the emergent author, who was determined by the collective movement the author helped determine.

As Foucault pointed out, the expense of Barthes' vision was the recovery of the author as a function at the precise moment that the author was displaced by the writing process as a controlling force. But then instead of resituating the "author" within a socioeconomic (as opposed to purely textual) process, Foucault identifies the fundamental mechanism at work in the writing process—the "displacement with a difference" of what preceded it—with the political practice of the "fundamental" author.

In so doing, Foucault has not confronted the perennial dilemma of the author; instead, he defines the conditions of textual finitude—the revisionary activity of the writing process itself—as the determining cultural practice of the fundamental author. And the fundamental author then does, in Foucault's text what the genius had earlier done in the genealogy of the term "author"; that is,

he claims a power to determine (in the form of a willed discontinuity from his practice) what otherwise would determine him.

Once transposed into the rarefied realm of revisionary discursive practices, Foucault's fundamental author can supervise a cultural domain organized like a textual or discursive milieu. His "fundamental" author, in other words, performs the historic role of the author as genius. He polices the boundary separating the cultural realm from contamination by those material and economic conditions no author can claim to have produced. It was this very separation of the cultural sphere from the political that produced the separation of the text from the author in the work of the New Critics. Insofar as he could be influenced by nontextual considerations (by the market economy, social movements, and such) the author had to be separated from the work (which by definition could not be influenced by nontextual matters). Following this *ultimate* separation of the work from its author (usually accompanied by a revolutionary rhetoric like Barthes' borrowed from social movements) a work no longer had to be addressed in anything other than textual terms.

The utterly textual milieu of the poststructuralists is ruled by the critic, or the authorless subject, as opposed to the author. In this domain the critic can do what the author cannot; that is, expose the rules that structure the language games productive of the textual environment. But at least one of these language games, the tendency of the textual environment to generalize its domain back into the political and economic spheres (as discourses), can reactivate the countermovement earlier described.

The authorless subject is not a fact of modern existence but only an effect of the discursive practices constitutive of subjectivity. Like every other discursive effect, the authorless subject depends on a critic's metatext for an elucidation of the operative rules of these practices. But if the critic's position has been identified with the rules of these discursive practices in the process of self-revision, the critic cannot transform these practices. Following the saturation of the cultural, economic, and political realms by the critic's text, only the return of an enabling concept of the author can facilitate a genuine transformation. In order to be enabling, the term "author" can no longer remain divided into partial subjects (the *auctor,* the author, the reader, the critic, the determining-determined subject). The controversy surrounding the term "author," however, may actually produce a material practice able to overcome the division in cultural realms that depends on such a partitioning of human subjectivity.

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