

People Quote People

The death of the Author 2.0

Press Release 10 October 2007

The (second) removal of the author is merely a historical fact.

The figure of the romantic genius was born in the XVIII century. Since this time, many speculations have surrounded the myth of authorship and its aura. Then it has been the culmination of capitalist ideology, in which the greatest importance is typically attributed to the author as an individual. The images and ideas to be found in ordinary culture are now often tyrannically centered on the lives of authors – on their tastes, and passions.

By the first decade of the XXI century, the myth of the author had died.

The user-producer is an idea that describes the digital experience, in which the freedoms embedded within the digital culture allow for ordinary people to become artists and producers. This model fundamentally challenges the traditional assumptions of authorship - it moves away from the idea of the romantic notion of authorship, which saw authorship and cultural production as an isolated activity of a genius sitting and creating something out of nothing.

In the digital act of copying data we lose the concept of the original and we increasingly forget the author. So the only effective things that we remember and feel are narrative codes and moral signs.

The democratic diffusion of tools for creating and for spreading content, the explosion of economy of imagination, the sharing of intellectual products, the prosumers and the social network of web 2.0 - these factors have desacralized the figure of the author and have stripped it of its aura. It has been plunged into the Pangea of Knowledge, which is the only one creator of human culture, transversal in time and in place.

As authorship becomes indistinguishable from the multiplicity of authors, this profusion transforms the culture and their creators into a unique body. It's the collective intelligence; it's the return of the rules of oral and folk culture. Collaborative creativity, influences, remix, sampling, reshaping and meshing of diverse publications of intellectual products, from ideas and concepts, to arts and researches; these are the causes that have diminished the character of originality, individuality and autonomous composition.

Culture consists of multiple writings, indeed, everything is to be distinguished. This multiplicity is collected, united, and this place is not the author, as we have hitherto said it was.

So the author goes back to its old work of being a compiler, and their name isn't important anymore. It's the inevitable way: increasingly it becomes difficult to be sure of attribution - it might not refer to a real individual.

Again as in the past, anonymous narrative contributions are the roots of our culture and our perception of reality. Contemporary examples of such social spaces are YouTube, MySpace, Digg, Delicious and Blog Sphere. In the end, the fifteen minutes of fame for each of us goes down to zero seconds, but each little piece of art becomes infinitely more useful for human beings. It's the forest that takes its shape from the tree, not vice versa.

The quote represents culture itself as the principle of human becoming, the improving of human thinking, from quoting to quoting, from the evolution of ideas to others and their negation. Culture is a tissue of citations, resulting from thousands of sources of culture and signs. The history of human thinking is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture.

AS FOLK :: AS ORAL CULTURE :: AS networked culture.

Authorship, originality is of no or little relevance in virtually all traditional forms of popular culture all over the world. Most folk songs and folk tales, are collective anonymous creations in public domain. Variation, modifications and translations are traditionally encouraged as part of their tradition. Many authors founded a lot of their wealth on folk tales, by taking them out of public domain and turning them into proprietary and exploiting that.

The same is true for many works considered part of the high cultural canon, crafted by unidentified, often collective authors: Homer's epics for example, or the tales of 1001 nights, which were spread by storytellers and of which no authoritative, 'original' written version ever existed. In the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance, original authorship was even more disregarded than encouraged. Literally works typically render themselves canonical by not inventing new stories, but rewriting existing one, so many adaptations of the same. Originality of the work is to recognize the value that various users contribute through their modifications and adaptations to an existing work, thus placing higher premium on collaborative production than on isolated production. In fact the history of cultural production has, to a large extent, been the history of collaborative production, and this is true in all kinds of human achievements. Many work is considered part of the high-cultural canon, crafted by unidentified, often collective authors. Shakespeare was brilliant play write: we should also remember the fact that he drew rather liberally from various sources, form history, mythology and the work of his peers, as inspiration and as source for modification.

It's the language that speaks, not the author. The author is just the person who writes. Linguistically, the author is the "subject", not a "person", and this subject is void inside because it is originated by what defines it.

Work of art tries to set itself free from its artist, challenging preconceived ideas or opinions, and sometimes being able to exceed the importance of its creator.

“Right or wrong, once these sayings get into the language they're impossible to eradicate”
David McKie

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