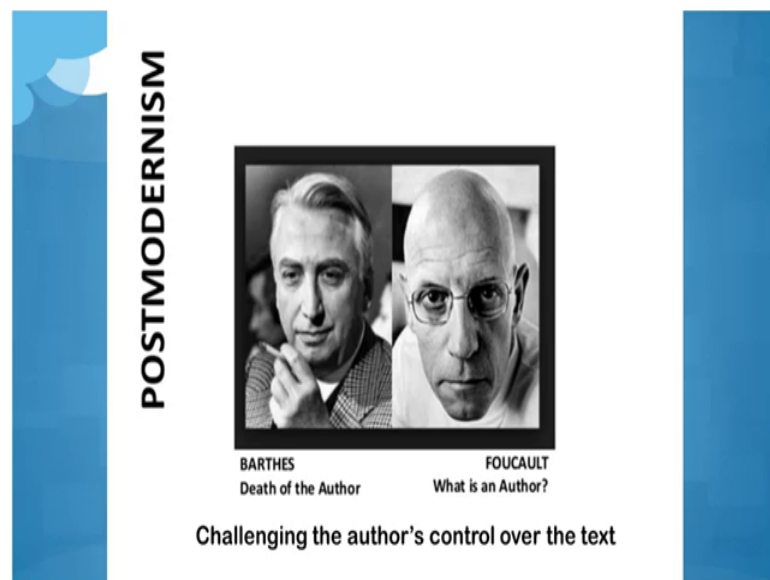


Postmodernism in Literature
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Week - 02
Lecture – 04a
What is an Author?

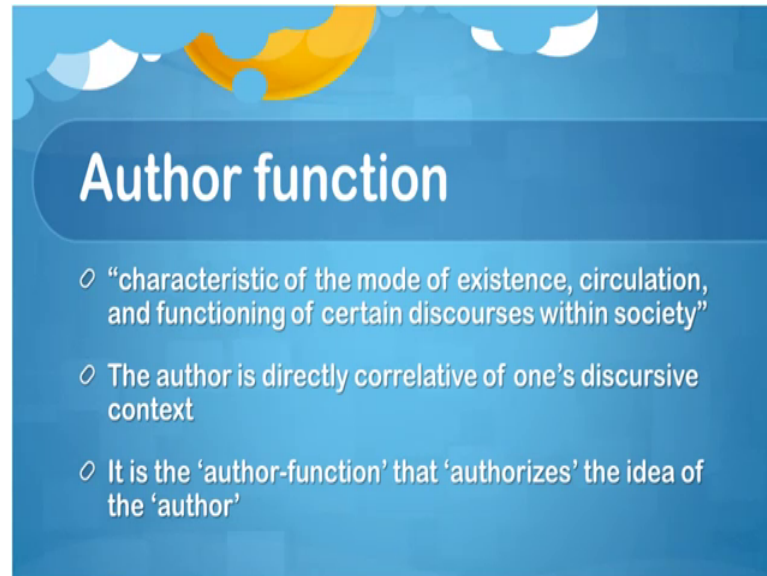
Good morning and welcome again to this NPTEL lecture postmodernism in literature. In the last couple of sessions over the week we have been taking a look at the changing notion of the idea of the text and the idea of the author.

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And we especially took a look at Barthes essay death of the author, and also we are now in the process of taking a look at our analysing our focus what in an author to text which have radically challenged the authors control over the text. In the continuation with our discussion of focus what is an author?

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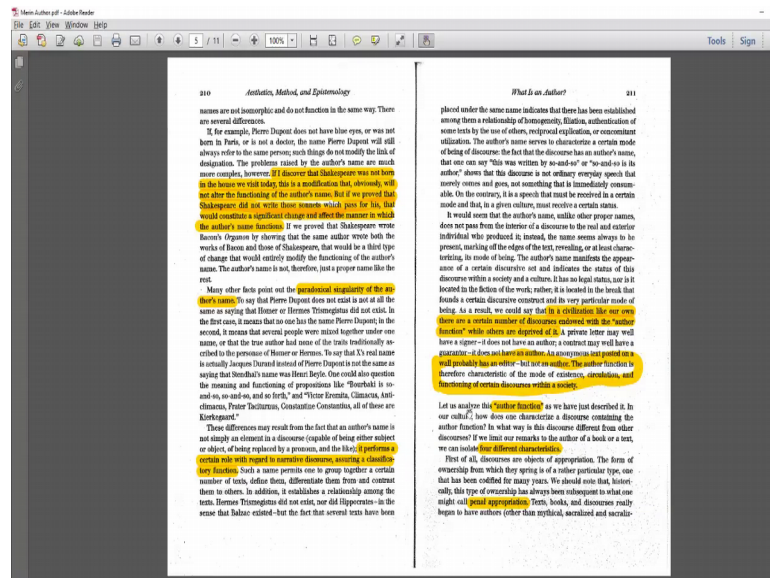


We have already taken a look at the ways in which Foucault begins to highlight the notion of the author function where he talks about the characteristic mode of existence circulation and functioning of a certain discourse within society and how he shows rather succinctly, rather clearly how the author function is also related to various discourses men which manifest within our particular discourses in society.

And he also highlights the fact that the author is directly correlated with ones discursive context and that the authors function the authority which is being invested upon the author is directly correlative of the context in the discursive context within which the authors and texts are placed.

And eventually he also leads us to be convinced that it is the author function that authorizes the idea of the order and here he takes the attention away from the proper name of the author from the personality of the author towards a certain path toward certain functions, a certain particular roles is that the author figure performs in this different in different disguise of contexts.

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Having said that Foucault sets out to analyse this authors function as we have just described it and he goes on to ask this question. In our culture how does one characterize a discourse containing the author function in what way is this discourse different from other discourses if we limit our remarks to the author of a book or a text we can isolate 4 different characteristics. So, in this also incidentally frames the crux of focus essay what is an author and here we begin talking about the four characteristics that Foucault has detailed in this particular essay.

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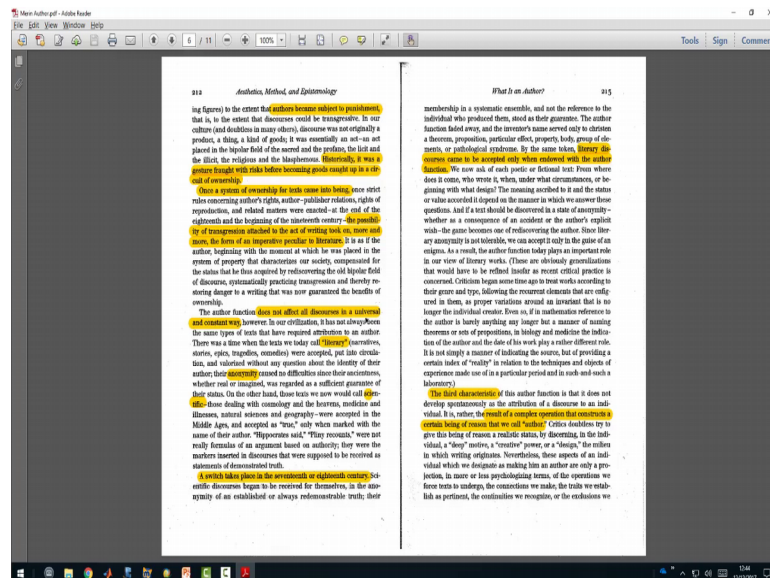
First characteristics outlined by Foucault is by identifying particular text and objects of appropriation here he is drawing your attention to the legal and institutional systems which have played a very significant role in identifying the aspects of ownership and the aspects of authority in connection with the author and the text.

Here we may also recall the rise of the printing press after the reformation and how the dissemination of various religious texts challenged the authority of the catholic church during the time in across Europe and here we are also being we have also been we have also been alert to the fact that there was at a point of time in cultural literary history where the idea of the author was not very significant.

In the in other words there were a number of folktales there were a number of texts who are texts which were getting circulated under the tag of for being anonymous. The name of the author was not very significant to understand what the text is to interpret the text to situate the text within a particular cultural context.

But later the situation changed Foucault reminds us in the spirit of being a historian he reminds us that later the later that entire scenario changed and the legal and institutional aspects began to play a significant role in identifying in appropriating particular texts with particular authors and the term that our Foucault uses for this is penal appropriation.

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And then he also talks about how subsequently authors became subject to punishment. So, here there is a very direct connection that he makes between the text and the author and how by appropriating by attribute in a particular text to an order. There is also a way in which the author is being subject to punishment so, that the transgressor form of writing could be identified and quite appropriately punished.

And here I read from Foucault essay in our culture and doubtless in many others discourse was not originally a product a thing a kind of goods it was essentially an act an act placed in the bipolar field of the sacred and the profane the licit and illicit the religious and the blasphemous.

Here if you are familiar with the history of English language and literature and the European intellectual tradition we are also being made alert to the fact that that is a historical trajectory to this to this identification of transgressive literature, there is a historical trajectory an intellectual tradition which could be traced back to this act of punishment, this act of responsibility being an being bestowed on the figure of the author and subsequently who calls sums up historically it was a gesture fraught with risks before becoming goods caught up in a circuit of ownership.

So, this idea of ownership of literary texts this idea of ownership of particular kinds of ideas particular kinds of writing is also equated is also connected to the idea of penal appropriation wherein the possibility of punishing a writer the possibility of stopping an author from writing also rests. So, this author function has got multiple levels of existence at the historical and the ideological level it is also a political act if we if we closely engage with it.

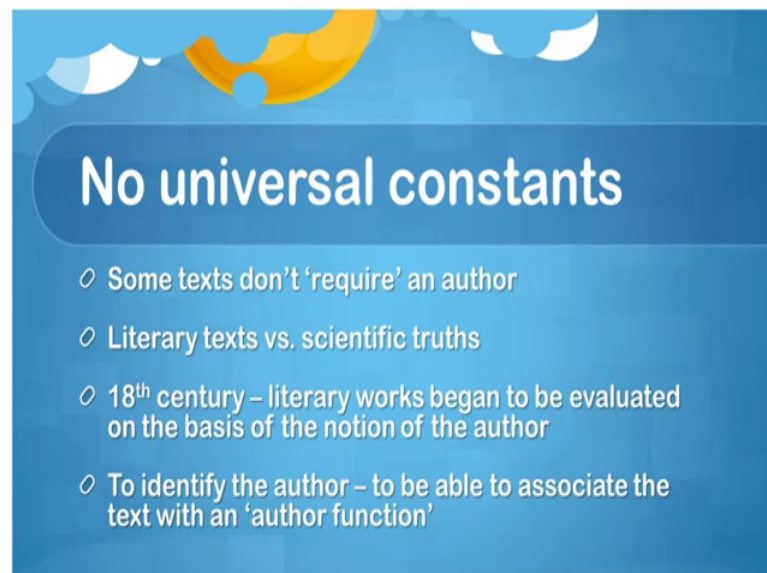
And Foucault further writes once this system of ownership for text came into being the possibility of transgression attached to the act of writing took on more and more the form of an imperative peculiar to literature. And this is in fact, something that we continue to see even in the contemporary by when we identify particular kinds of discourses, particular kinds of writing with ah particular author, and his biography, and his background there also are various possible political religious and ideological problems that emerge. There are ways in which one could transfer one could punish the transgressive writer even in the contemporary through this system, through this identification of the author function.

Having said that Foucault takes us to the second characteristics where he is also alerting us to the fact that this function the author function does not operate uniformly across all disciplinary discourses. For example, there is a marked difference that one could see historically also between sciences and the literature and also in the way in which the discourse is about the philosophy and the poet has been shaped.

The author function of the philosophy and the author function of the poet, the construction of the author for the construction of the philosopher as an author, the construction of the performance of the author is radically different from each other and he also tells us about the historical emergence of the sciences and the literature in terms of its authorship.

While by showing by illustrating that in earlier historical periods it was not important to assign an author to literary text, but on the contrary it was very important to assign an author figure to a scientific text to the articulation of a scientific truth, but down the centuries there is also a sort of a shift that that Foucault begins to identify and this also became quite significantly important in identifying this shift in the in the roles of these functions and shift in these author functions.

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And in that sense he also highlights the fact that there are no universal constants as far as these all the functions are concerned. Because some texts do not require an author at all he tells us and here again he brings in the distinction between the literary texts and the

scientific truths and then he also tells us how in the 18th century the literary works began to be evaluated on the basis of the notion of the author.

All of a sudden from being with the kind of anonymity associated with literature in the 18th century and as he also finds out in the beginning of the essay and as well as in Barthes essay we could not feel find this notion being reflected in the 18th century perhaps with the rise of individualistic ideas with the height with the with the the enlightenment ideas reaching its peak. We find a way in which literary works are beginning to be associated beginning to be evaluated on the basis of the notion of the author, the idea of the author.

And here he also tells us that subsequently this process of identifying the author is eventually to be able to associate the text with an author function because if the author is not identifiable if the author is anonymous the identification of the author function is also fraught with the number of problems because the identity of the author is not known . So, the figure of the author assumes importance only when the author function gets a font only when the author function gets fore-grounded.

Now, Foucault draws our attention to the third characteristic and tells us it is rather the result of a complex operation that constructs a certain being of reason that we call author. Now Foucault draws our attention to the third characteristic and says the third characteristic of this author function is that it does not develop spontaneously as the attribution of a discourse to an individual.

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Characteristics

(3) 'result of a complex operation' - Not defined by the spontaneous attribution of a text to its creator but through a series of precise and complex procedures - a rational construct (4 criteria - Saint Jerome)

- Some transhistorical constants in how authors are culturally constructed

(4) Does not just refer to one individual - gives rise to multiple selves and a series of subjective positions

So, here he is also drawing our attention to a series of precise and complex procedures then this emergence of the author function undergoes and here he also is trying to perhaps tell us that this is a rational construct.

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practice. All these operations vary according to periods and types of discourse. We do not construct a "philosophical author" as we do a poet, just as in the eighteenth century one did not construct a critic as we do today. Still, we can find through the ages certain constants in the rules of author construction.

It seems, for example, that the manner in which literary criticism once defined the author or, rather, constructed the figure of the author beginning with editing texts and discourses - is directly derived from the manner in which *Quintilianus Institutio oratorum* (or possibly the texts at its disposal, in order to "produce" an author) a work, modern criticism uses methods similar to those that Christian exegetes employed when trying to prove the value of a text by its author's sanctities. In *De Poet. Illustribus*, Saint Jerome explains that homogeneity is not sufficient to identify legitimately authors of more than one work; different individuals could have had the same name, or one man could have, illegitimately, borrowed another's patronymic. The name as an individual trademark is not enough when one works within a textual tradition.

How, then, can one attribute several discourses to one and the same author? How can one use the author function to determine if one is dealing with one or several individuals? Saint Jerome proposes four criteria: (1) if among several books attributed to an author one is inferior to the others, it must be withdrawn from the list of the author's works (the author is therefore defined as a constant level of quality); (2) the same should be done if certain texts contradict the doctrine propounded in the author's other works (the author is then defined as a field of ideological or theoretical coherence); (3) one must take into account works that are written in a different style, containing words and expressions not ordinarily found in the writer's production (the author is here conceived as a stylistic unity); (4) finally, passages quoting statements made or mentioning events that occurred after the author's death must be regarded as interpolated texts (the author is here seen as a historical figure at the crossroads of a certain number of events).

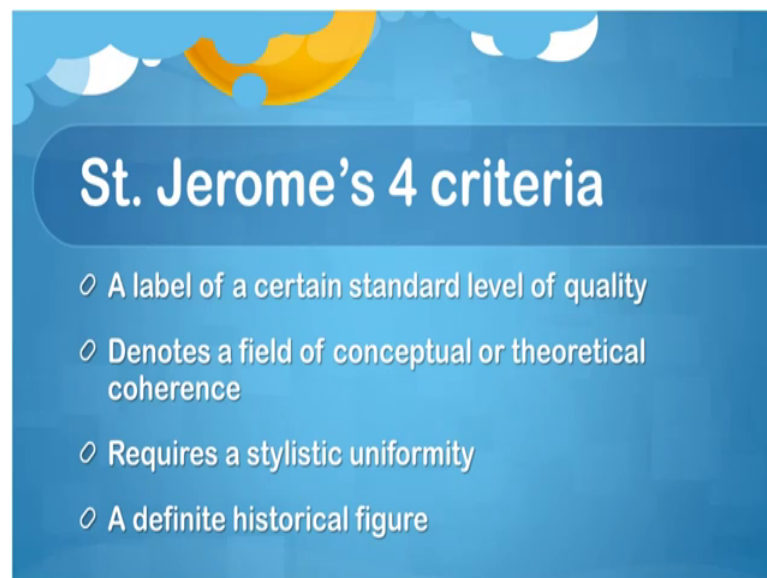
Modern literary criticism, even when - as is now customary - it is still concerned with questions of authentication, still defines the author in much the same way: the author provides the basis for explaining not only the presence of certain events in a work, but also their transformations, distortions, and diverse modifications (through the

By way of illustration Foucault tells us we do not construct a philosophical author as we do a poet and he also draws our attention to the ways in which this idea of the author functions the ways in which particular functions are assigned to the authors they could be traced back to the Christian tradition.

And also he uses by way of illustration the four criteria used by Saint Jerome in his own words how can one use the author function to determine if one is dealing with one or several individuals. Here we are also being given to understand that there is also a number of possibilities of the ways in which one could talk about the author sometimes a one text or more than a text would be associated with author and sometimes a range of texts and an entire discourse would be associated with the author.

So, when we are talking about a range of texts a range of her writings produced by the same author how do we engage with it how do we assign this particular author function. So, here he uses the four characteristics the four criteria proposed by Saint Jerome and to quickly sum up the 4 criteria.

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Firstly, the author functional also functions as a label of a certain standard level of quality. For example, there could perhaps be our grocery lesson written by the poet Thomas Stern Eliot. There is also the work the major work produced by T. S. Eliot the wasteland.

So, both are not both are not been looked at looked at with the same set of judgment, with the same set of evaluation we have certainly placed at two different pedestals and we also find that one qualifies more as a legitimate work of a T.S. Eliot then perhaps a grocery list or a or a list of reminders written out by him.

And secondly, the author function also denotes a field of conception or theoretical coherence and this is also a method through which one can eliminate conflicting or contradictory ideas from a particular discourse but from a particular a set of texts or from a range of 5 discourses and this also gives us this also gives the author function the additional burden, the additional responsibilities of isolating.

Only the things which could conveniently be conveniently be brought under one rubric and thirdly there is a requirement of a stylistic uniformity which is quite similar to the second point, the second criteria are being put forward.

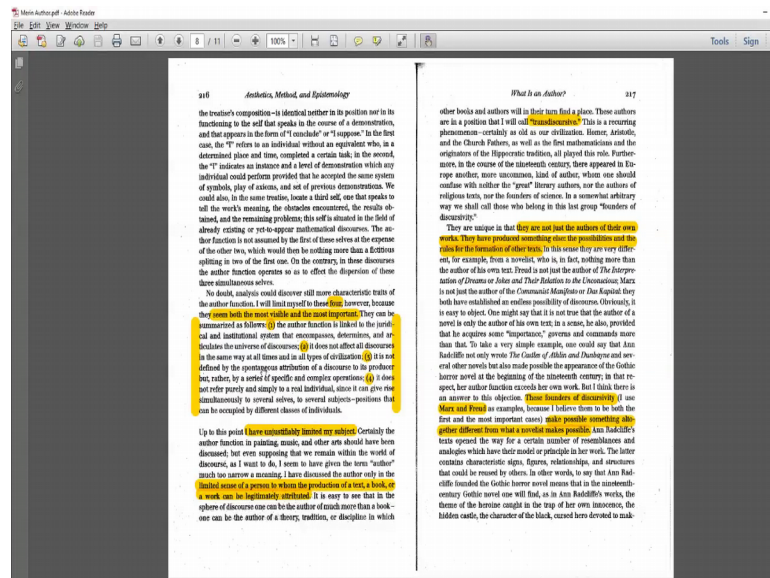
And fourthly the author function also ensured that ensures that the author remains as a definite historical figure and through these 4 criteria which are detailed out further in Foucault essay he also draws our attention to some transhistorical constants how authors are culturally constructed.

So, here through a very systematic argumentative fashion Foucault is highlighting the fact that author is a creation, author is a construct, author is a cultural a construct which was also a product of a range of disposes of range of our shifts in the knowledge systems and in the intellectual tendencies.

And fourthly when he talks about the characteristics of the author function, fourthly author function does not just refer to a single individual in fact it gives rise to multiple selves in the series of subjective positions and this would be further elaborated when Foucault talks about the trans discursive position, but to give a brief overview of what he means by what he means by this is a perhaps it would just suffice to think of the works of a Freud or Marx in whose works we also find the possibility of the other texts emerging.

In other words Marx writings or frauds writings are not just about their own writings, but it is also about how the one particular text that they produced had the power had the possibility to produce other texts other discourses and perhaps an entire new paradigm of knowledge and entire a radically new form of thinking, a new system of thought into being.

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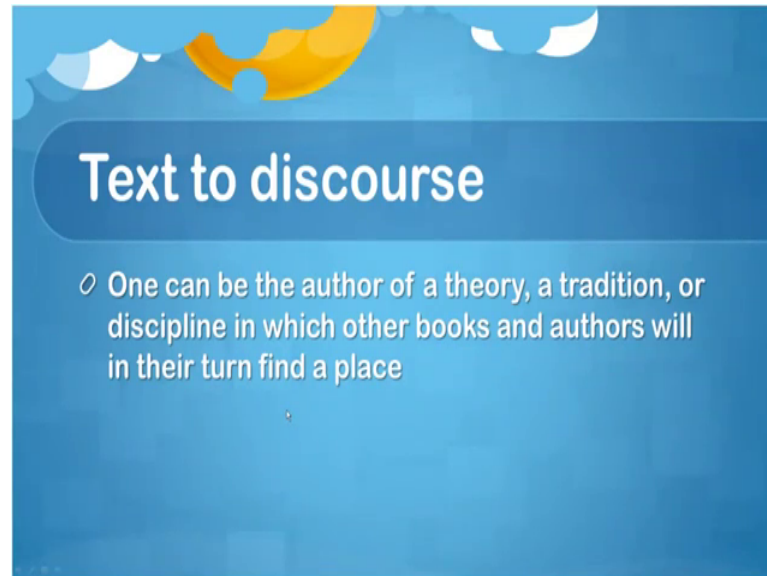


And having spoken about at length about these 4 characteristics Foucault also gives a rationale for focusing on the only these 4 characteristics and he says no doubt analysis could discover still more characteristic traits of the author function. I will limit myself to these for; however; because they seem the most visible and the most important and see he again goes on to summarize the 4 traits in a single paragraph.

And Foucault then draws our attention to a certain problem which is inherent in his own treatment of the subject of the author and the ways in which he goes on to unpack the idea of the author within particular discourses. He tells us up to this point I have unjustifiably limited my subject I have discussed the author only in a limited sense of a person to whom the production of a text a book or a work can be legitimate legitimately attribute.

He also tells us how he has not been able to engage with certain other fields such as painting music and other arts which he believes should have been discussed and having said that he takes the discussion further ahead to tell us about the possibilities of the author being much more than the author of a single book one can be the author of a theory a technician a discipline in which other books and authors will in their turn find a place.

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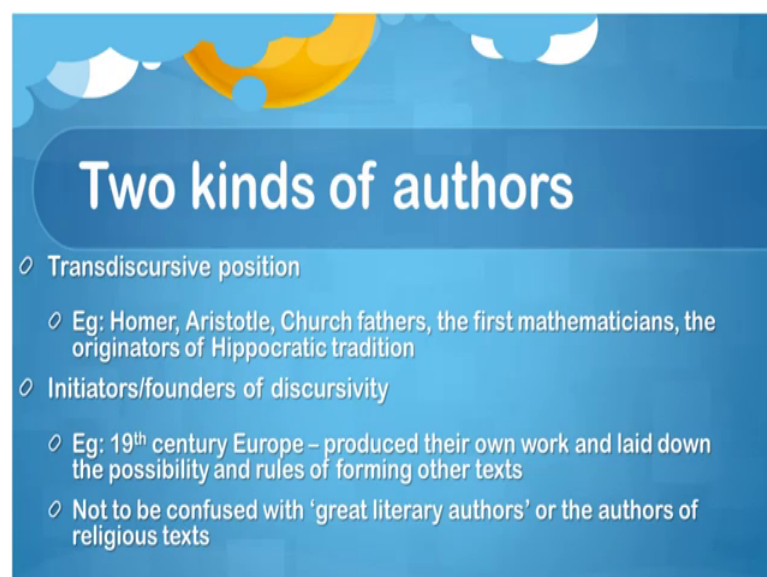


Text to discourse

- One can be the author of a theory, a tradition, or discipline in which other books and authors will in their turn find a place

Here we also find the essay taking us through this journey from the book being just a text to an entire discourse and here I iterate for Foucault writes one can be the author of a theory, a tradition, or discipline in which other books and authors will in turn in their turn find a place. So, the or the idea of the author the author function is not limited to a single book or perhaps a single set of books it could be, it could be extended to a range of discourse or even a range of discourses.

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Two kinds of authors

- Transdiscursive position
 - Eg: Homer, Aristotle, Church fathers, the first mathematicians, the originators of Hippocratic tradition
- Initiators/founders of discursivity
 - Eg: 19th century Europe – produced their own work and laid down the possibility and rules of forming other texts
 - Not to be confused with 'great literary authors' or the authors of religious texts

And it is in this context that he talks about different kinds of authors, and different kinds of discursive positions that they occupy and firstly, he talks about a trans discursive position and he give the examples of our Homer, Aristotle and the early Church fathers, the first mathematicians, the originators of the Hippocratic tradition. And he locate the significance of these trans discursive authors by talking about them as a recurring phenomenon certainly as old as a civilization.

So, there is a way in which we would also note that Foucault continuously are tries to place everything within the gamut of history. There is an attempt to historicize there is an attempt to traced the history of knowledge, the history of civilization, even through the discussions of authors, texts and related concepts.

And in this context he also identifies another set of authors who could be termed as a initiators or founders of discursivity. And for example, he talks about 19th century Europe where as where a number of writers who have been able to produce their own work and at the same time they also laid out the possibility and rules for forming other texts.

There is a there is also an overlap that they could find to work here with the forth author function that that Foucault talks about a little earlier in his text and this these initiators and founders of discursivity Foucault tells us they are not to be confused with the great literary authors or the authors of religious texts. Because he is not talking about the authors who authored a single important work a single masterpiece or a single or a set of very very important literary works, but he is talking about a set of writers who moved beyond the status of merely authoring a book to the founders and initiators of a range of discursive practices an entire discursive tradition perhaps.

He gives the telling examples of Freud and Marx and he also says these founders of discursivity I use Marx and Freud as examples because I believe them to be both the first and the foremost cases.

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Examples

- Freud → Interpretation of Dreams
- Marx - Das Kapital
- Ann Radcliffe ✓
- Similar to the founding of any scientific endeavour.
- Galileo

Endless possibility of discourses
Analogies AND
differences/divergences

So, when we talk about Freud we are not just talking about the interpretation of dreams. And we talk about Marx we are not talking about das kapital alone. On the contrary as Foucault puts it Freud is not just the author of the interpretation of dreams or jokes and their relation to the unconscious.

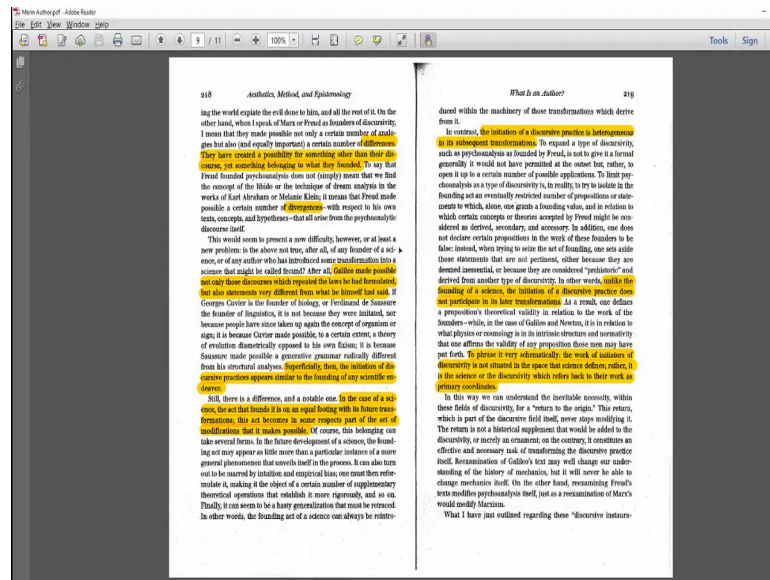
Marx is not just the author of the communist manifesto or das kapital they both have established an endless possibility of discourse and when he talks about this endless possibility of discourse he is not excluding all other kinds of writers who can in fact he also gives the interesting example of Ann Radcliffe who is was an early gothic fiction writer.

He also talks about how Ann Radcliffe made it possible for other kinds of gothic stories to emerge, but nevertheless he makes a very significant difference between Freud and Marx and writer such as Ann Radcliffe; Ann Radcliffe also just like Freud and Marx there were a number of analogies that we could identify post after her initiation into a gothic fiction writing.

But; however, what makes Freud and Marx is radically different from writers such as Ann Radcliffe is that there are also any number of differences and divergences that there will work had also given rise to it was not just about similar kinds of works it gave similar kinds of texts and discourses that came into existence after the Freud and Marx ideologies dominated.

But it was also about the ways in which a range of texts, a range of discourses were also able to depart from what Freud in Marx spoke about and here he also draws another parallel with scientific endeavour then says this could be quite similar to the founding of scientific endeavour and gives the example of Galileo.

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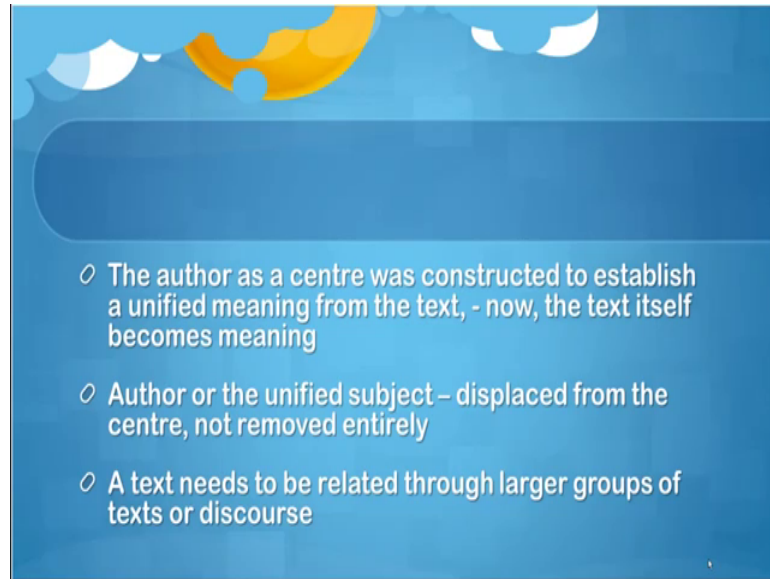


As the same day Foucault also identifies a notable difference in his own words in the case of the science the act that founds it is on an equal footing with its future transformations.

This act becomes in some respects part of the set of modifications that make it possible, but in contrast the initiation of a discursive practice is heterogeneous to its subsequent transformations so here while drawing a parallel between the initiators of discursive practice and initiator so far a scientific endeavours he is also aware of the ways in which they differ from each other and he further explains.

In other words unlike the founding of a science the initiation of a discursive practice, it does not participate in this later transformations and he sums up the section by saying to face it very schematically the work of initiators of discursivity is not situated in the space that science defines rather it is the science or the discursivity which refers back to their work as a primary coordinate. Here he is clearly privileging the initiators of discursivity over all other kinds of scientific endeavours.

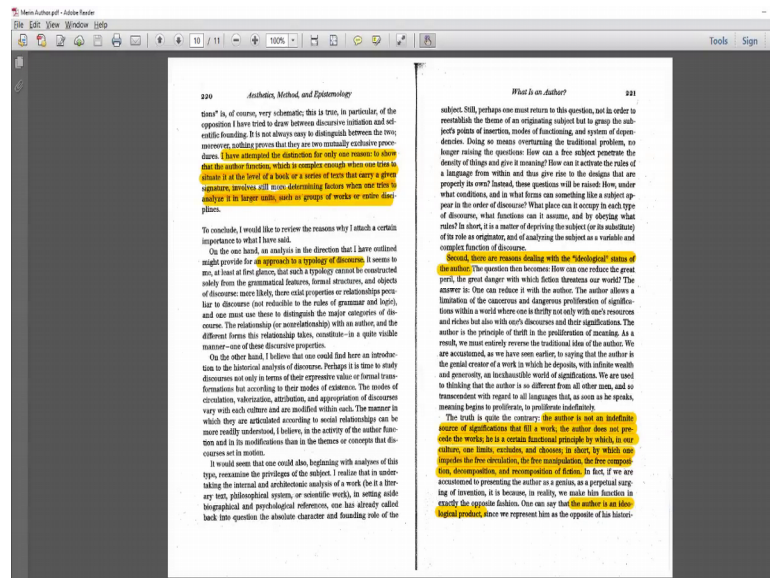
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So, what do these discussions eventually intend prior to this moment the author was constructed as a centre not to establish a unified meaning from the text, but now the text itself becomes a meaning and the author or the unified subject in Foucault's discourse we find being displaced from the centre but not removed entirely we also find certain significant departures from Barthes death of the author.

And here we also find Foucault making a very important turn in the history of discourse, in the history of the understanding of knowledge that a text needs to be related through larger groups of texts or discourse it cannot be viewed in isolation, it could not be studied in isolation because every text is part of the larger discourse this also forms perhaps the one the underlying principles of the postmodernist, critical theory and the postmodernist critical analysis.

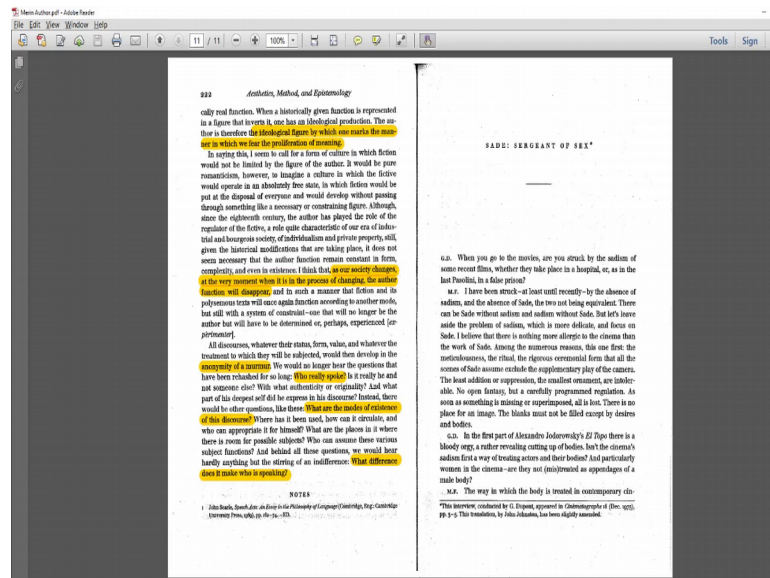
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In short by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and re-composition of affection. So, here by identifying author functions, the identifying the idea of the author with a set of traits which are also responsible for imposing limits for excluding one and choosing the other.

Foucault is also making us aware of the various ideological levels at which the function of the author forms, and he again reiterates this idea that the author is an ideological product.

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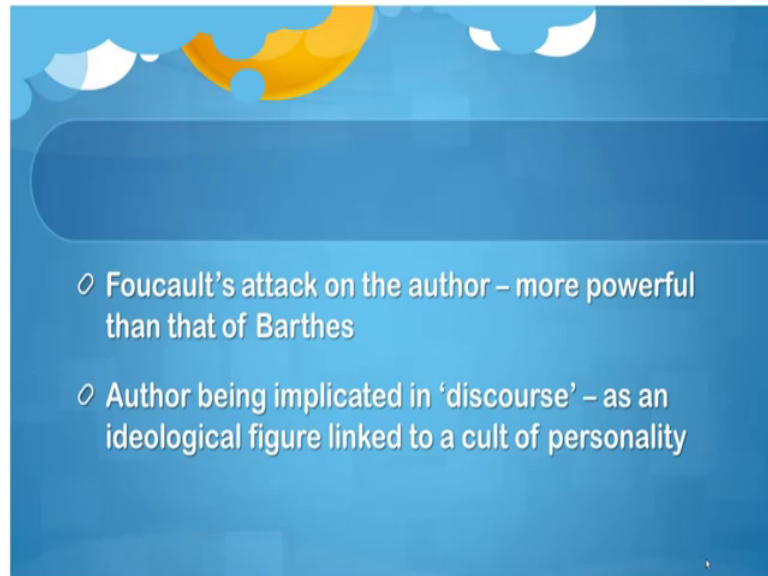
And he also just like Barthes towards the end of his essay pronounces the death of the author here and. In fact, we find Foucault presenting the author in such a way that this function is reduced to be quite irrelevant in his own words I think that our society changes and a very moment when it is in the process of changing the author function will disappear and then he also tells us about how we would eventually progress move towards the anonymity of Murmer and where who really spoke would become a rather irrelevant question.

And question such as what are the modes of existence of this discourse will replace the original question of who really spoke. Here in fact, he is also responding to one of the original points that he began with where he quoted Beckett asked the asked us this question what does it matter who is really speaking.

And here he also talking about the alternate set of questions which would be foregrounded once the relevance of the authorial voice is completely negated and he sums up and he ends this essay with this final note the same note in fact that he began with what difference does it make who is speaking.

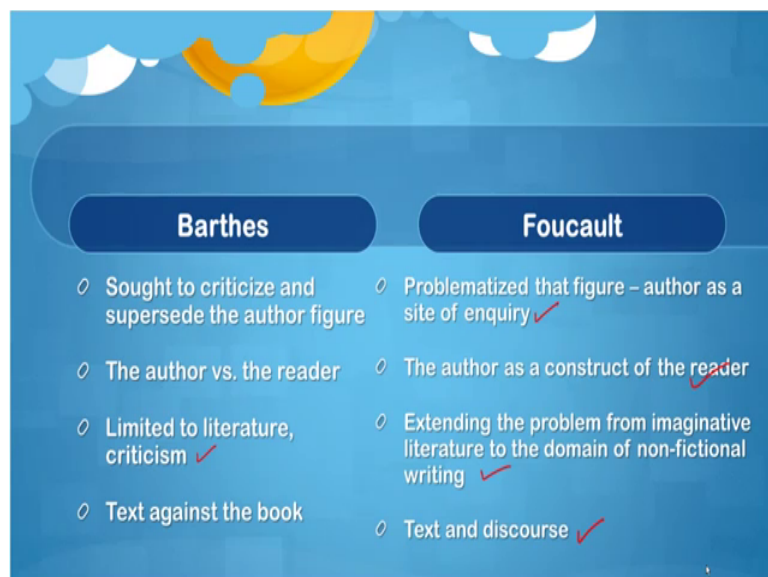
And here it is perhaps just a paradox that the essay also ends with a sort of a tribute to Beckett with whom to whom he alludes right at the beginning of his essay.

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Having taken a look at this essay by Foucault what is an author we also do allies at Foucault's attack on the author compared to the attack made by Barthes on the author is more powerful though Barthes actually pronounced the death of the author because, Foucault is more aware of the author being implicated in the discourse as an ideological figure who is also eventually linked to a cult of personality.

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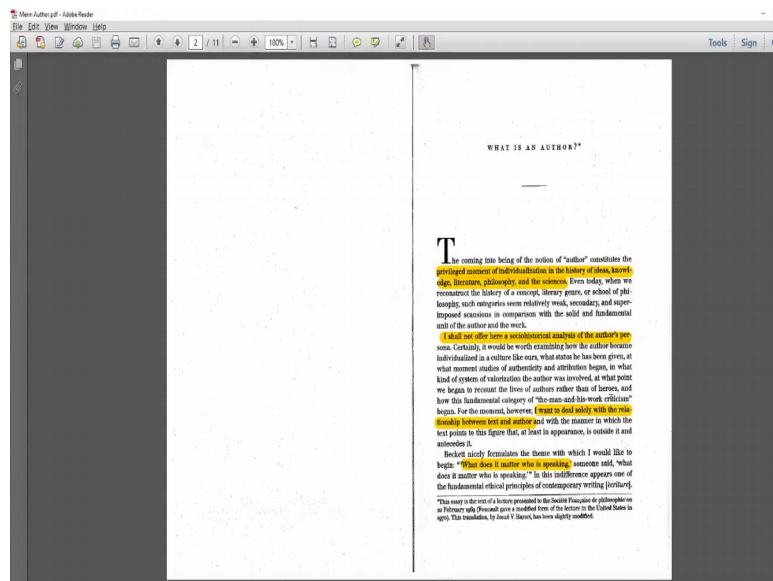
And maybe it is a useful exercise to also very briefly take a look at how a Foucault's articulation what is in author differs radically from that of Barthes death of the author.

Though both of them do believe in certain fundamental promises it is useful for the purpose of analysis to delineate some of the basic difference as well.

Barthes seeks to criticize and supersede the author figure, but Foucault problematized that figure and he also places the author as a site of inquiry. And secondly in Barthes essay we find that a certain kind of a binary is being created between the author and the reader where the birth of the reader is at the cost of the death of the author.

But in Foucault analysis the author is a construct of the reader, he is a cultural construct who is also the product of the kind of functions that the reader attributes to the author and in Barthes framework we can see that he is a limited to the ideas of literature, and literary criticism, but Foucault succeeds in extending the problem from imaginative literature to the domain of non fictional writing.

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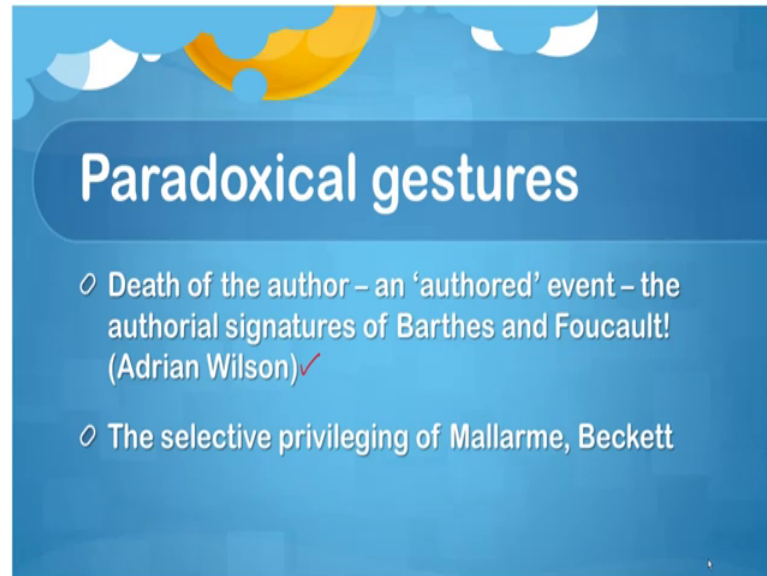


And this is also evident in one of the first statements that Foucault makes in his essay the coming into being of the notion of order constitutes the privileged moment of individualization in the history of ideas knowledge, literature, philosophy and the sciences.

So, here we also find that there is a way in which a Foucault includes all kinds of knowledge system, all kinds of disciplines into his realm of discussion. And finally, while Barthes locates the text against the book Foucault attempts to talk about this move

of from the text to discourses or rather the location of the text within particular a discursive formations and discursive practices.

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Having said that perhaps it is also interesting to take a look at some of the paradoxical jesters that both of these essays also foreground it is hard to miss the fact that the death of the author itself is an authored event. The authorial signatures of Barthes and Foucault are very much evident in our discussions related to the death of the author that sense Adrian Wilson our contemporary literary critical theorist.

And there is also another paradox that that is really hard to miss there is a selective privileging of certain writers such as Stepaney Mallarme or Samuel Beckett and we also find that certain authors are being accepted from the particular charges that are being levied against authors or the author functions in general.

There have been a number of criticisms against the against both of these works there are a number of ways in which various critical principles, various critical schools have tried to read against the grain of the essays by Barthes Foucault.

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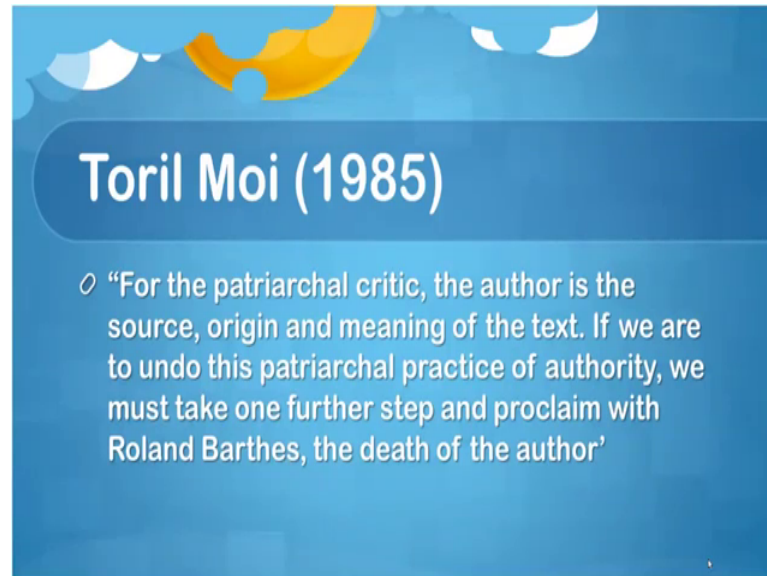


And there is also a very recent book by Sean Burke the death and return of the author in which he tries to analyse the contemporary implications of Barthes, Foucault, and Derrida we may perhaps get back come back to one of these some of these works at a later point.

There have also been a feminist interpretations of the works of Barthes and Foucault and it is also at this point interesting to note that a number of feminists have reacted to Foucault's and Barthes essay because the death of the author or perhaps the disappearance of the author.

They thought may not always work in their favour because historically men had been more privileged in the field of writing than women and just when women begin to articulate their voice to say that the author has died or that the other function does not exist anymore is also to take away the newfound privileges from women and other minorities. But nevertheless there have also been a number of ways in which feminist criticism runs parallel to that or for the articulations by Barthes and Foucault.

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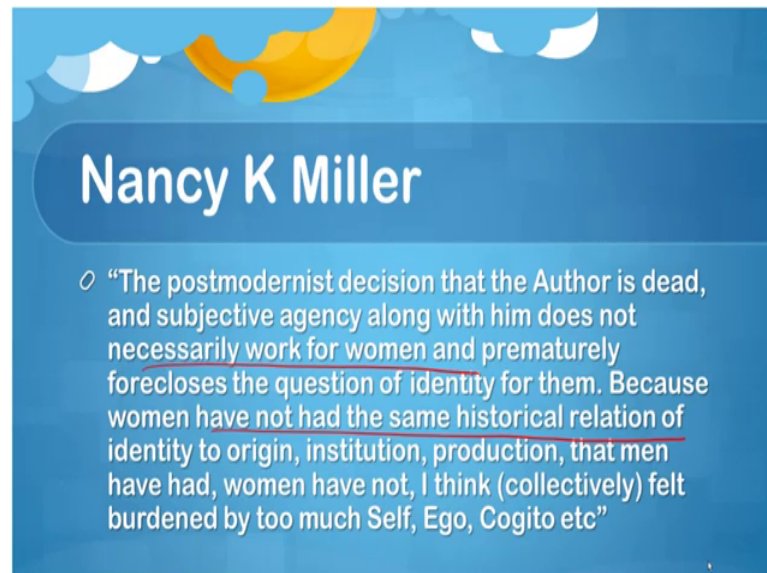


Toril Moi (1985)

- “For the patriarchal critic, the author is the source, origin and meaning of the text. If we are to undo this patriarchal practice of authority, we must take one further step and proclaim with Roland Barthes, the death of the author’

For instance in 1985 Toril Moi one of the leading feminist critics wrote for the patriarchal critic the author is the source, origin and meaning of the text if we are to undo this patriarchal practice of authority we must take one further step and proclaim with Roland Barthes, the death of the author.

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Nancy K Miller

- “The postmodernist decision that the Author is dead, and subjective agency along with him does not necessarily work for women and prematurely forecloses the question of identity for them. Because women have not had the same historical relation of identity to origin, institution, production, that men have had, women have not, I think (collectively) felt burdened by too much Self, Ego, Cogito etc”

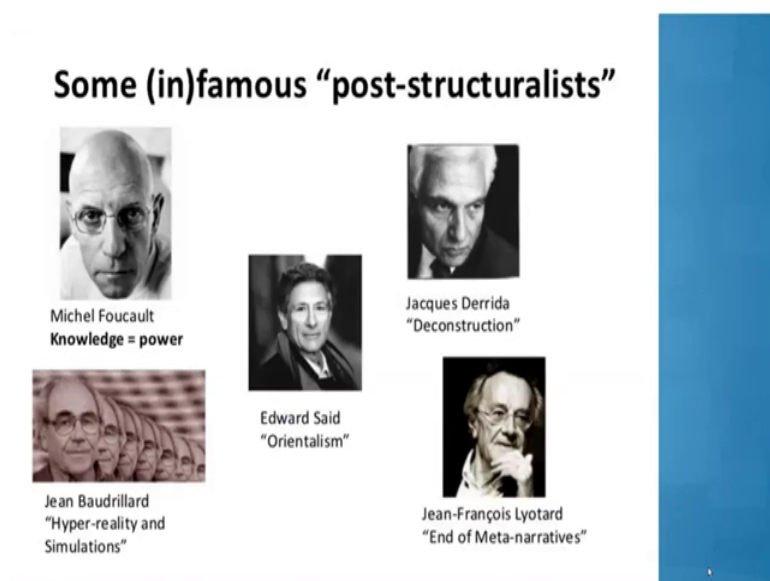
There also been an other feminist critics who felt otherwise which is Nancy K Miller who wrote the postmodernist decision that author is dead and subjective agency along with him does not necessarily work for women and prematurely forecloses the question

of identity for them. Because women have not had the same historical relation of identity to origin, institution, production, that men have had, women have not, I think collectively felt burdened by too much self, ego, cogito, etcetera.






In spite of these varying contested views it is important to continue to look at how post structuralism have as informed the basis towards our understanding of post modernism. Because it is within the concerns and the intellectual conceits of our French post structuralism that we continue to locate post modernism in the our contemporary.

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Some (in)famous “post-structuralists”



The slide displays five portraits of post-structuralist thinkers arranged in a grid. Each portrait is accompanied by the thinker's name and a key concept or work associated with them. The portraits are: Michel Foucault (top left), Jacques Derrida (top right), Edward Said (middle), Jean Baudrillard (bottom left), and Jean-François Lyotard (bottom right). A solid blue vertical bar is positioned on the right side of the slide.

 Michel Foucault Knowledge = power	 Jacques Derrida “Deconstruction”
 Jean Baudrillard “Hyper-reality and Simulations”	 Edward Said “Orientalism”
	 Jean-François Lyotard “End of Meta-narratives”

In that sense in the coming sessions we shall be looking at some other post structuralist writers such as Jean Baudrillard Edward said Jacques Derrida and also of course, Lyotard who gave perhaps the first ever definition of post modernism as the end of meta narratives.

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And in tune with what we have just highlighted we shall also be taking a look at the alternative views in connection with the postmodernist approaches. This course perhaps would help you to engage with these diverging practices and these contrasting views to eventually develop your own idea of post modernism.

And I also hope that the discussion of these two texts Barthes death of the author, and Foucault's what is an author would also help our you develop a taste for this kind of a critical reading and also for critical analysis.

Thank you for listening and look forward to seeing you in the next session.