

Author

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1 Definition

The author (real or empirical) can be defined in a narrow sense as the intellectual creator of a text written for communicative purposes. In written texts in particular, the real author is distinguished from the mediating instances internal to the text (cf. 2.1; Schmid → Implied Author [1]; Schmid → Implied Reader [2]; further Alber & Fludernik → Mediacy and Narrative Mediation [3]). Beyond linguistically created works, the term author is also used for works in other media such as music and the visual arts as well as for comics, photography, film, radio and television programs, and computer games.

A broader understanding of the term author is used in the following contexts, among others: as conveyor of action in a socio-cultural context (cf. 2.3); in the sense of specific cultural-historically relevant conceptions of authorship; as a unifying instance in the interrelation of works (*œuvre*); as a reference for classification in terms of epoch and canon; and as an important point of reference for the meanings ascribed to works through which the recipient can determine the author's intention and/or author-related contexts relevant to understanding a work (cf. 2.2).

2 Explication

During the 20th century, a broad spectrum of how the author is understood was developed in scholarly circles: for framing concrete contexts (e.g. "producer of cultural goods"); for abstract author functions (e.g. *causa efficiens*); for concepts of the author relevant for understanding such as the implied author (Schmid → Implied Author [1]). Unlike the dominant tendencies in the intensive discussions conducted since 1990 on the status and understanding of the author, this analysis will focus on the author's narratological relevance.

2.1 Communicative Instances in Narrative Representations

As in other domains, it holds for narratological analysis that the real author is held responsible for the communicative intention and form of a narratively organized

work (on the roles of the author in literary communication, see Okopień-Sławińska [1971] 1975; Fieguth 1975). In the case of narrative fictions, it has proved useful to assume that mediacy is transferred to text-internal instances (“voice”) including the narrator (Margolin → Narrator [4]) to various degrees of explicitness and, possibly, characters (Jannidis → Character [5]) in the storyworld. To these there correspond addressee instances such as the narratee (Schmid → Narratee [6]; further Prince → Reader [7]) or figured addressees, respectively. The arrangements of autofiction (within literary autobiography, e.g.) constitute a special case.

2.1 Authorship and Reception of the Work

Authorship is to be seen as a status attributed to a work with culturally differing author constructs bound up with authorial self-reflection and self-presentation in a spectrum ranging from self-assurance to skepticism as to the validity and scope of claims to authorship. In the sphere of (fictional) literature, constructs such as the author as *vates*, *poeta doctus*, creative genius or “writer” can be found.

Independent of such typologizing expressions, particular author constructs also hold good for the reception of works in specific periods (e.g. the image of Milton during the Romantic period). These types of construction can refer to the totality of an author’s work (cf. *œuvre* author or career author—Booth 1977: 11) or to representative individual works.

Since the 18th century, there has been a culturally significant need to fall back on the author for interpretative processes and value judgments of an artistic work based on the creative act, authenticity, individuality, originality, unity of the work and its depth of meaning. From this perspective, the definition of “authorialism” in Benedetti’s sense ([1999] 2005: 8–12) is based on the experience that in the modern era it is “impossible for a work of art to exist except as a product of an author” (10)—as “being authored” (74–8). A culturally (and legally) important result of this is that the authenticity of a work is attested with reference to the real author as its originator, which is significant, for instance, in the editing of texts (cf. Bohnenkamp 2002).

An author-related reception focuses on the intention, attributed to the author, to convey a particular understanding of his work. In this sense, the work can also be seen as an expression of the author’s personality (including his feelings, opinions, knowledge and values). In particular, differing conceptions of author and authorship determine, alongside the concerns of historiographic, classificatory and editorial practices, ascription of meaning to literary texts within scholarly (cf. Spoerhase 2007) and non-scholarly circles as a result of biographical reference to the author, e.g., or with reference to the author’s intention, reconstructed in a largely hermeneutic

manner. In practical criticism, inclusion of the author as a category for textual interpretation is accepted (cf. Jannidis et al. eds. 1999: 22–4), this approach often being adopted in the “author-critical” problematics of literary theory and methodology (Jannidis 2000: 8; Winko 2002).

An alternative concept is marked by the term “author function”: the author as an individual person is held to be external to his work—as is maintained by Foucault, for example—so that in the reception of the work, he can be ignored as a reference point for the ascription of meaning. In a way that varies historically and culturally, the author is integrated into (discursively ordered) functional contexts, such as proprietary or legal concerns, or into classifications of cultural communication. The resulting author functions are thus not to be related to concrete individuals, but rather assigned, for example, to discourses or to intertextual constellations.

2.2 Author as a Social Role

Creatorship gives rise to certain consequences in a social context such as legal implications regarding a claim to intellectual property (copyright) or the author’s legal responsibility for the effects of his work. These and other aspects (e.g. origin, education, patronage, market and media dependency, author-publisher relationships, royalties and honors, author groups and interest groups) are the concerns of the social history of the author, broken down into subsections such as the history of producers and distributors (cf. Jäger 1992; Haynes 2005; Parr 2008).

2.2.1 Collaborative as well as Anonymous, Pseudonymous and Fictitious Authorship

Author collectives (with at least two partners) can be found in various combinations of media (cf. Detering ed. 2002: 258–309; for *belles lettres*, cf. Plachta ed. 2001, for artistic collaborations, cf. Bacharach & Tollefsen 2010). During Antiquity and in the Middle Ages, e.g., texts were produced, over and above those created by an author through transcriptions, additions, commentaries and compilations which were attributable to more than one author. Since the late 18th century, popular prose fiction has often been written by anonymous or pseudonymous groups of authors and highbrow literature by authors in cooperation, usually declared. New possibilities have arisen thanks to electronically stored, collectively produced hypertexts published on CD-ROM and/or online (cf. Landow ed. 1994; Simanowski 2001; Ryan 2006; Hartling 2009). Collective authorship specific to the medium is the rule in musical theater, cinema (cf. Kamp 1996) and television.

Numerous historical and cultural variants can be found for anonymous, pseudonymous and fictitious authorship (cf. Schaff 2002); until well into the 20th

century, these practices were often resorted to in literary publications by women authors.

3 History of the Concept and its Study

The following (European) overview focuses on the author as the creator of literary texts, and in particular of narrative fiction.

Since Antiquity, terminological ambiguity in the concept of author and competing concepts of author and authorship have been apparent (cf. Burke ed. 1995; Jannidis et al. eds. 1999: 4–11), as witnessed, e.g., in the variously defined conceptions of the heteronomy and autonomy of the author. The underlying tendency from Antiquity to the modern era can be described as a shift from an instrumental-performative understanding of authorship to personalization characterized by creative individuality (cf. Wetzel 2000: 480).

Author as a neutral term alongside scriptor/writer first began to dominate after the end of the 18th century in the context of an economic and legal situation specific to the period and as a neutralizing claim set up to counter the emphatic understanding of “poet.” The word “author” has developed into an umbrella term and now denotes all forms of creatorship for a work in the context of public communication.

3.1 Antiquity

Author in the literal sense is of Roman origin (*auctor*), and has no Greek equivalent. However, Plato had already devised for poetic productivity the concept of a speech guided by “enthusiasm” (literally “possessed by God”), to which the later model of the poet pleading for (divine) inspiration as well as the *poeta vates* can be assigned. Alongside the dominant idea of the production of poetic works by means of inspiration, a further author model was formulated in the *poietes* (“maker”; Lat. *poeta faber*) favored in Aristotle’s *Poetics*: poetic works are created out of *techne*, i.e. craftsmanship and technical skill (Lat. *ars*) (cf. Kleinschmidt 1998: 14–34).

New ways of conceiving of the production of poetic works arose as a result of the complex of meanings surrounding the term *auctor* in the ancient Roman legal system: an *auctor* is the bearer of *auctoritas* (cf. Heinze 1925) who enjoys particular rights and/or who can transfer (and thus authorize) these rights in order to promote something or achieve some goal. This “authority” was founded on, and confirmed by, the special knowledge available to the *auctor*. In this respect, the author model of the *poeta faber* was upgraded to the *poeta eruditus* or *poeta doctus*.

3.2

Middle Ages

Use of the Latin term *auctor* (Eng. *author*; Ital. *autore*; Fr. *auteur*; Span. *autor*; Ger. *Autor*) was extended to cover the creatorship of factual and fictional texts. In general, it was only from the late 15th century onwards that scholars and occasionally poets were referred to as *auctores*, a practice that continued up to the early decades of the 18th century. Viewed from a cultural-historical perspective, the classical model of the *poeta vates* was re-interpreted as an extension into the sphere of knowledge of the promises and teachings of Christianity so that where this commitment was supplemented by poetological knowledge, the result was to link up the author model with the *poeta doctus*.

In contrast to scientific texts, literary texts in the broader sense (as in epics or in the *Minnesang*) were often handed down without the creator being named, so that individual or collective anonymity prevailed. Little distinction was made between the creators, copyists, editors, commentators and compilers of texts in favor of “original” creatorship in need of protection (cf. Minnis 1984), with far more emphasis being placed on group identity: e.g.—depending on the type of text—in the *imitatio veterum* (supported by the canon that provided a model) or—when mediacy-oriented—in the case of collective manuscripts.

3.4 Early Modern Period

With the invention of the printing press, a public sphere based on written language was established for which, both in the dominant scholarly literature and in the diversified sphere of *belles lettres*, the individuality of the author as well as the authenticity of the single work and reliable copies (guaranteed by printing) gained progressively in importance. In literature, the author model of the *poeta eruditus* and the *poeta doctus* dominated starting from the time of Humanism. For these texts, “interpretation” was not the appropriate form of analysis, but “commentary,” relating the text to previous sources backed up with “authority” (cf. Scholz 1999: 347–50). Also revived was the model of the poet moved by inspiration, sometimes in the sense of an *alter deus* (cf. Scholz 1999). Initially, creatorship remained legally undefined. It was not until the turn of the 18th century that the first contractual arrangements between publishers and authors were devised concerning royalties, etc.

3.5 Early 18th Century until the Mid-20th Century

As a result of varying national cultural developments in Europe, the author developed into a legal instance in the course of the 18th century, acquiring material entitlements vis-à-vis publishers, requiring protection against unauthorized reprints

and plagiarism, and bearing personal responsibility for the content of his publications (e.g. Bosse 1981; Hesse 1991; Jaszi & Woodmansee eds. 1994). With the development of the objective conditions linked to creating factual and fictional texts for market-led public communication, the term author became a value-free collective name to which professional designations such as writer (*Skribent*, *Schriftsteller*, *écrivain*, etc.) as well as evaluative classifications such as poet/*Dichter* could be assigned. A broad spectrum of patterns of individual and collective authorship developed (cf. Haynes 2005: 302–10) for the social roles that arose from these concrete author models, and they were often accompanied by the authors' reflections on their self-perception (cf. Selbmann 1994).

Additional criteria for artistic production regarding creativity and originality (genius) became important for the understanding of the author as poet/*Dichter* from the final third of the 18th century onwards. Thus, the author could be defined legally, materially and intellectually (cf. Haynes 2005: 310–13). In emphatic formulations such as “art as religion,” the life experiences, conceptions of style and work of the (godlike) poet were bound together into a whole and endowed with a special aura (cf. Bénichou [1973] 1999). In this process, narrative prose was enhanced with a literary status in the course of the 18th century and was put on an equal footing with the “classical” genres of drama, epic, and verse as a poetic art.

New facets of the concept of author emerged from scholarly engagement with works of the poetic art, their theory and history which got underway after 1820 (cf. Jannidis et al. eds. 1999: 9–11). The author together with the story of his life and work became a reference point for expert textual analysis (biographical criticism), scholarly editions, literary- historical (re)constructions and evaluations for establishing the canon with practical cultural consequences, particularly for education and teaching. Toward the end of the 19th century, methodological debates emerged which, in different ways, fell back on the author as an interpretative norm for ascribing meaning, above all in the scholarly handling of texts. In this process, plausibility was legitimized in a variety of ways on the basis for example of: (a) the author's ascertainable intention (cf. Hirsch 1967); (b) extensions of the intentional aspect through a critique of psychoanalytical or ideological assumptions to meanings of literary texts beyond the author's intention: “to understand the author better than he understood himself” (Strube 1999); (c) the author-oriented selection of relevant contexts.

Approaches to ascribing meaning to texts in scholarly circles were developed in competition with these concepts from the early 20th century onwards, based on the assumption that all information relevant to meaning could be drawn from the text in question alone (cf. close reading, New Criticism, *werkimmanente Interpretation*, *explication de texte*

, formalist, structuralist and text-semiotic approaches). In support of such approaches, criticism remained wary of the “intentional fallacy” (cf. Wimsatt & Beardsley [1946] 1954), emphasizing the irrelevance of the real author’s intention for scholarly interpretation.

It was in this context that categorial distinctions between the real author and speaker instances internal to the text (cf. narrator, lyrical I), advocated since the beginning of the 20th century (cf. Friedemann [1910] 1965; Susman 1910) and accepted in the 1950s, gained in importance. As a textual instance located above other instances and differentiated from the real author (also as a reference point for text immanent interpretations of works), the “implied author” was brought into the discussion by Booth in [1961] 1983 even though, in the following decades, it was often called into question as “not absolutely necessary” (cf. Kindt & Müller 2006); complementary to the “implied author” is the “implied reader.”

3.6 Since the Mid-20th Century

In this phase, both author-centric and author-critical approaches to textual interpretation have been further clarified in scholarly debates on literary theory, and the resulting competition between them was intensified. Hence, the *intentio operis* or the *intentio lectoris* (Eco 1990), e.g., was placed in opposition to the interpretative norm of the *intentio auctoris*. For ascribing meaning to a text put at a remove from the author’s creative process as a result of publication, decisive emphasis is placed on the activity of the “implied reader” constructed during the reading process, or the real reader. This position is taken up in various ways in the concepts developed by empirical literary criticism (cf. Schmidt 1982) and by cognitive narratology (Herman → Cognitive Narratology [8]).

The concept of *écriture automatique*, developed by the French Surrealists during the 1920s, was then added to the critique of the assumption that a work is authentic and autonomous, the author being understood merely as the executing instance (cf. Barthes [1968] 1977) of the autonomously productive literary language. In a further step, the boundaries of the author-oriented work were cancelled out in intertextual constellations (cf. Kristeva [1969] 1980) and in “discourse” (cf. Foucault [1969] 1979), and the author function superseded the person of the author (author as “intertextual construction,” as “discourse function”): with a Nietzschean gesture, Barthes and Foucault announced the “death of the author” (cf. Burke ed. 1995). The debate on the curtailed potency of authorship was carried on through the concepts of poststructuralism and the New Philology. The broader the medial spectrum for communication with text and with representations analogous to text grew during the second half of the 20th century, the greater the interest in the contribution of the

material conditions of production and communication to the ascription of meaning became: authorship is now often conceived of as arrangement, montage, bricolage and remix (Wetzel 2000: 486, 491–92). Complex constructions of authorship are assigned to cinematic works (cf. Chatman 1990), while specific author concepts for the theory and reception of the products of the so-called new media, such as in hypertexts and cybertexts, are still being disputed (cf. Winko 1999).

In contrast to these positions, a multi-faceted debate, extending beyond the methodological problems of textual interpretation, got underway in around 1990 in which restitution of various aspects of the author was advocated (e.g. Biriotti & Miller eds. 1993; Jaszi & Woodmansee eds. 1994; Couturier 1995; Ingold & Wunderlich eds. 1992; Jannidis et al. eds. 1999; Detering ed. 2002). The debate took place with reference to the problematic relevance of origin, biography and types of experience to the processes of writing and forms of expression in concepts of gender studies (e.g. Walker 1990; Hahn 1991; Lanser 1992; Haynes 2005: 299–302) and those of postcolonial studies. Interest in the circumstances of authorial creativity and its scholarly investigation has intensified (cf. Ingold 1992); and still unabated is the commitment, developed since the 1920s by the sociology of literature and, since the 1970s, by the social history of literature as well as by cultural materialism, to investigation of the social role of the author and of the social institutions and processes that affect his work (cf. Wolf 2002: 395–99; Haynes 2005: 291). From the perspective of cultural history authorship has been conceptualized as "cultural performance" within a "cultural topography," in connection with social contexts, technological developments, medial configurations "and other cultural developments" (cf. Berensmeyer et al. 2012). Entering an "overlapping area of biopoetics, pragma-linguistics, and cognitive poetics" (cf. 2013) Eibl argues that the development of interpersonal communication (and ultimately also of meaning construction through literary narration) has brought about the basic assumption and social practice of ascribing what is communicated to an originator: in fictional texts this role is taken by the narrator's voice initiating and guiding the reader's imagination and understanding (cf. 2013: 229).

4 Topics for Further Investigation

Questions to be pursued from a narratological perspective concern primarily the interpretation of literary texts (cf. Jannidis 2000): is the ascription of meaning with reference to aspects of the real author theoretically legitimate and fruitful practically speaking? Which of the six empirically determined author-oriented interpretative strategies proposed by Winko (2002) are absolutely necessary, and to what extent can they be hierarchically ordered? At the same time, are references to the real author conceivable other than in the orientation of ascribed meanings

toward the author's intention, such as the author-oriented selection of relevant contexts for textual interpretation? Must reference to the author's intention represent an alternative to the implied author, or can author's intention and implied author complement one another in the ascription of meaning (cf. Kindt & Müller 2006)? Should reference to the real and/or implied author in any way constrain the randomness of meaning/significances ascribed through reader activity? In the ascription of meaning to texts, which characteristic relations can be identified for the reader's construction of the real author, the implied author and the narrative instance (cf. narrator)? Is the implied author a meaningful analytical category only for literary texts, or also for journalistic and historiographical texts?
(Translated by Alexander Starritt)

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