

Abstract

Richard Müller: *Authorial subject as a gesture, trace, and hypothesis*

The present text addresses questions concerning the so-called authorial subject of literary text, the concept being shaped by two simultaneous intensities. There is an imaginary, concentrated sense of an author, auctor, „behind“ the text as a living originator, creature of concrete, vibrant, personal experience, even a source of meaning; there is also a contradictory feeling, manifested in the reflection of modern subject in art and philosophy, which in the post-Cartesian line of thinking, represented by Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud or Jacques Lacan, is meant as nonautonomous, divided, split, and un-conscious. I strove to study carefully the concepts of authorial subject, subject of writing, implied author and other correlative terms in the contexts of structuralist, phenomenological, hermeneutic, semiotic, poststructuralist and cultural materialist literary criticism, aesthetics and philosophy. In my reading, a repeated, recurring process emerged in the studied theoretical material, in which the author became an interpreted, hypothesized fiction exactly in the moments he or she was meant to become identified, categorized and objectified (this came as a common trait in Umberto Eco's, Wayne C. Booth's, and – to a lesser degree and always self-consciously – in Miroslav Červenka's meditations on the topic).

In virtual conversations with the texts of Jan Mukařovský, Émile Benveniste, Michail M. Bakhtin, Miroslav Červenka, Zdeněk Mathauser, Petr A. Bílek, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Miroslav Petříček, Michel Foucault, Wayne C. Booth, Gerard Genette, Wolfgang Iser, Paul Ricoeur, Umberto Eco, Julia Kristeva and Stephen Greenblatt, I attempted to rethink the significance of “the outside” and “the inside” of a text, of how can someone be thought of as speaking or being spoken in literary texts, both narrative genres and poetry, what exactly is the relation between “a textual subject” and

“the extratextual individual”, and what it means when a text is thought as *being* something by *meaning* something. My own approach could be described as semio-poststructuralist, and in my emphasis on the reading side of the processes, a pragmatic assumption was contained: an effort by the reader to signify. I observed (and reflected in my own interpretative hermeneutics, concentrated on symptomatic, subversive readings of the given texts) how cracks, rifts and fissures of and in the reading process come to provoke interpretation as something that happens, rather than something that simply is; in this happening of text, a process emerges, a self-conscious, self-fashioning process, which brings forth and embodies material density and opaqueness of *signifiante*, of moving signification. This model of *signifiante*, based on concepts like semantic gesture, unintentionality, *écriture*, *trait*, *le sémiotique* and social circulation, supports a conception of authorial subject as less a textual function, a sub-iectum, and more as a gestural motion, inherently inscribed with contingency, irregularity and what I come to call – in reference to Roland Barthes’s essays on photograms and photographs and his *sens obtuse* and *punctum* – erratic sense. This inherently self-contradictory character of signifying practice is embedded in my own proposal of subjects of authoredness; this model (in chapter VI. 2) reflects the tension between unanthropomorphic disposition of *écriture*, writing, intextedness, and sense of an anthropomorphic cause of reading reactions, bestirred by concurrent motivations of actualizing text and deferring its „sense“. In this way, the author can re-appear, as with Stephen Greenblatt’s narrativization of his Will Shakespeare, as a *trait*, resonating voice, re/materialized „presence“, or, with Julia Kristeva, as a bodily wrinkle, scratch of an existence of subject of enunciation. Julia Kristeva’s work, which associates concepts of *khora* and *jouissance* with poetical language and observes negative dialectics between phenotext and genotext, is especially instrumental in putting the strict separation of a textual subject and a historical individual into doubt. I also paid attention to a difference between Greenblatt’s and Jacques Derrida’s understanding of *trace* or *trait*; while in the first case trace is something which retains the material, the bodily, the tangible in the historical processes of exchange, circulation and cultural “commerce”, Derrida understands trace as a pure difference, *différance*, which defers even the “founding” dichotomy of materiality and immateriality. In the last chapter I try to demonstrate, using Miroslav Petříček’s essay “World as an Analogon to Image”, that this feeling of an author as an im/materialized presence/absence, author-trace, author-gesture (gesture which catches our eye, like a “grapheme”) is principally thinkable on the level, where *différance* defers the very conception of writing or speech as something fundamentally opposed to an image.

The authorial subject thus emerges from gestural motion through the text, not as a self-conscious projection of an author in his work as his second self, nor a communicational analogue to the implied reader, nor even a partner in dialogue with the reader, unless we understand such a dialogue as an echo of our own voice in “speaking”, like Greenblatt did, “with the dead”. What empowers this resonance, however, is the *energia* of social and mimetic circulations, density and foldedness of texts, which, however, comes through only in a reading attitude which casts on the folded, wrinkled, ruffled textedness accidentally an unelucidating, obscuring light.