

The disassociation of the writer from the text

Literature



The paper "The Disassociation of the Writer from the Text" is a great example of an essay on literature. The IT revolution unleashed in the contemporary information-driven society has set certain literary contexts of its own. Considering the deluge of websites on the internet, one strongly seems to believe that in today's world; almost every person is a writer. The text has become more important than the writer. People seem to be least concerned with the face behind a text. The panache for the consumption of information overrides the need for recognizing the creativity of a writer behind a text. The 21st-century craving for individuality has ironically deprived the writers of their uniqueness and originality. May sound conservative, but to what extent is it justified to analyze literature from the vantage point of industrial mass production that reduces a writer to the level of a lay craftsman. Such a mentality not only deprives a writer of one's due recognition but also demeans a text to the level of a commodity that has a utility within a limited context. Does not a writer have the right to be inseparably associated with the object of one's creation? Can the readers and the critics proceed to the point of interpreting a text, devoid of any association with its procreator? It certainly sounds like snatching a child from the arms of a young mother with the excuse that she is too naïve to take care of her progeny. At least that is what the critics from the classical school tend to think. It will be really worthwhile to take the example of a celebrated writer like Shakespeare, to deliberate on the concept of the death of the writer. When we say that in the 21st century the writer is dead, does it matter whether Shakespeare wrote the plays attributed to him? Does it make any difference, so far as the interpretation of the vast body of works considered to be written by Shakespeare is concerned? In a literary context,

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it will be true to say that everything is original yet nothing is original. Then should the writer's plea for authenticating the originality of their work? Does the overall context of a work of literature get altered once it is established that its author is not the one that was actually considered to be? Is the personality of a writer really important so far as the analysis and interpretation of the works written by him/her are concerned? The deliberation on this problem will be really facilitated if we take a more generalized view of it. Thus the right question to be asked would be, "Is the personality of a writer really important from the standpoint of the readers and the critics?" With all due respect to the traditionalists, the plea for the death of a writer with regard to one's work is not motivated by any savage need for usurpation of some coveted intellectual property. Infact the death of a writer is the only way to set a writer free from the onerous burden of lending an interpretation to the text.

A writer never tells one's readers to sort out a meaning for the text written by him/her, unless and until they deliberately intend to do so. A reader is literally free to read a work of literature for the sheer delight of reading it. Are not the writers as human as their readers? Then why should a writer be loaded with the additional burden of extending a meaning to his/her work? The concept of the death of a writer owes its origin to the need for the humanization and demystification of the profession of writing[1]. A writer has the undeniable write to be as happy and carefree as any other member of society. Once a work of art is created, the moral duty of a writer is to simply let one work wonder free amongst the readers, without yearning for controlling the interpretation of that work. Interpretation is too big a task to

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be handled by one person, even if one happens to be the creator of the work to be interpreted. The position taken by the post-structuralist theorists pertaining to the death of the writer has its moorings in the ancient Protestant ambition disassociating the Bible from the interpretational incursions of the Catholic Church.[2]The writer is demystified of its role as a superhuman high priest who is desperately expected by the laity to furnish an authentic interpretation of the text. The scope of interpretation is almost as vast as the number of individuals in the universe. The issues of interpretation and meaning are pretty big issues to beg for the interference of only one writer.[3]When a reader chooses to read the work of a writer, the writer not only transfers the textual format of that work to the interested reader but also tacitly consents to transfer the freedom for the interpretation of that work to that reader. Thus the writer has to necessarily die so that his/her work may take new meanings according to the individual temperament and leanings of one's readers. A work of literature is open to multiple interpretations. That is why we have so many interpretations of almost all the important classics and popular works of art. A writer is not merely a steel jacketed, isolated capsule of consciousness, standing aloof from the past present, and future influences. Still, merely trying to interpret a work of literature by sifting through the political and religious influences, historical events, cultural leanings, ethnicity, psychological mindset and the personal attributes of a writer is too narrow, sloppy, and flawed attempt to understand a work of art.[4]Every piece of work created by a writer contains multiple layers of meaning. The duty of the readers and the critics is to liberate a work of art from the rampant, interpretive, classical tyranny, so that more contemporary, hidden, and nascent interpretations may rise to the

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surface. This calls for separating a work of literature from its creator.

Because a writer is a passionately alive human being, that is why he/she is expected to die, so as to liberate a work from the clutches of, mummified, ancient, and isolationist interpretations. When a work of art is born, along with it are born its multiple interpretations.[5] So the duty of a seasoned critic is not only to construct interpretations by peeping into the times and life of a writer but also to scrub away the misleading, superficial patina from that work, so as to give way to more relevant and diverse interpretations. The traditionalists were constantly bothered with the task of unearthing what the writer meant in a particular work of literature?[6] The fact is that it is next to impossible to determine what a writer meant in any work of literature? The characters created by a writer have a life of their own. They speak a language that is pertinent to their role in the script. Sometimes the characters created by a writer in a work of fiction are so strong, that they effectively snub the actual voice of a writer to pursue their own leanings. In such a scenario, trying to seek autobiographical shreds in a work of literature may end up being futile and counterproductive. Even if one assumes for a moment that it is possible to interpret a specific text in the context of a particular writer, the detailed analysis of this premise will undeniably establish that such an endeavor is fundamentally flawed and defective. Readers rarely know a writer in person and most of the time they construct a persona of the writer out of a reading of one's works. On the basis of their imagination and conjectural skills, they try to reconstruct a writer's views, convictions, and beliefs. Thus a writer is what his/her reader considers him/her to be.[7] The readers and critics try to read out a writer from a given text. It is not that an insight into the background of a writer is not helpful in <https://assignbuster.com/the-disassociation-of-the-writer-from-the-text/>

the task of critical interpretation. Still, the dilemma associated with such an approach is that it deprives a text of a myriad of diverse meanings and interpretations. Thus any attempt to look out for a writer hidden behind a work of literature is to acutely limit one's approach to literary criticism and interpretation. A reader is as much the face behind a text as a writer is expected to be. Thus it is possible to disassociate a writer from a piece of literature, but it is next to impossible to wean away from a reader from the object of one's attention, be it a work of literature or art. So whether it is Shakespeare, Milton, or Eliot, in the 21st century, the writer is dead. Long live the writer!