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Uncertain Figure of Modernity: Theorizing beyond the Author, from Death & Resurrection to Obsolescence.

The figure of the Author has been one of the most controversial hinge-points in critical discourse, pushing back against the literary history of the 19th century and the rise of the modern figure of the Author to a seemingly indestructible binary, theorists such as Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault sought to liberate the meaning of the text from the Author / Text binary. The rhetorical pomp of crucial post-structural essays such as 'The Death of the Author' would prove seductive and propel the tenets of deconstruction far and wide in literary studies. However, the rise of postcolonial criticism in the 1990's would pose a challenge to this hedonistic unraveling of deconstruction by succinctly placing the author back into the fold. The importance of the author's historical consciousness and the filiation of the author to history override the considerations of deconstruction, according to Senayon Olaoluwa the modernist notion of neutrality and autonomy of literature keels into entropy within the ambience of postcolonialism. Indeed, the drastic implications of deconstruction would prove to be unpalatable beyond the sphere of postcolonial criticism. In this paper I seek to explore the challenges posed to the author not by new theory but by changing modes of literary production and dissemination. In the flattened anonymous space of the World-Wide Web can the Author retain his status? Web culture and the challenges it poses to Authorship are more than just the piracy problem and the copyright interest of the author. Could the very notion of the author be dismantled or made redundant by the hive mind? With an intense impulse to reject corporatist models of which the figure of the Author is but a single facet, the hive mind, cocooned in its own utopian rhetoric and euphoria appropriates and disseminates literature and intellectual property across the globe, often without regard to the law or to the long-term consequences of such actions. Certain critics have described Wikipedia as "the new social text of humanity" but does Wikipedia have an author? Is there a new pact of readership and authorship emerging from the new media technologies of the Web and the practices which it engenders?