

EPIISODE  
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# Creativity: a cultural history

# Exercise: defining genius

What do you think about when you think about creativity? What about genius?

Find a quote, image, graphic, or anything else that reflects your associations.

Post them on the padlet at:  
<https://uniofnottm.padlet.org/ajzlh1/yd4sh6lbb213u451>



# Discourse and Myth

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- Ways of thinking -> talking -> acting.
- Common-sensical, taken for granted
- Systems and knowledge and meaning
- Socially constructed
- Situated in historical and cultural context
- Enforce power relations

Cats are mean

Women talk more  
than men

Anyone can  
succeed if they  
work hard

Kings are chosen  
by God

Homosexuality is  
not a mental  
illness



The idea of the creative genius as we have it today is newer than we think.

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In fact, the idea of creativity is newer than we think.

“A poet is an airy thing, winged and holy, and he is not able to make poetry until he becomes inspired and goes out of his mind and his intellect is no longer in him.”

— Plato, *Ion*

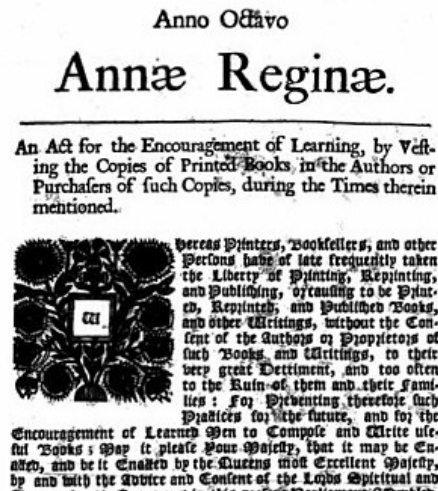


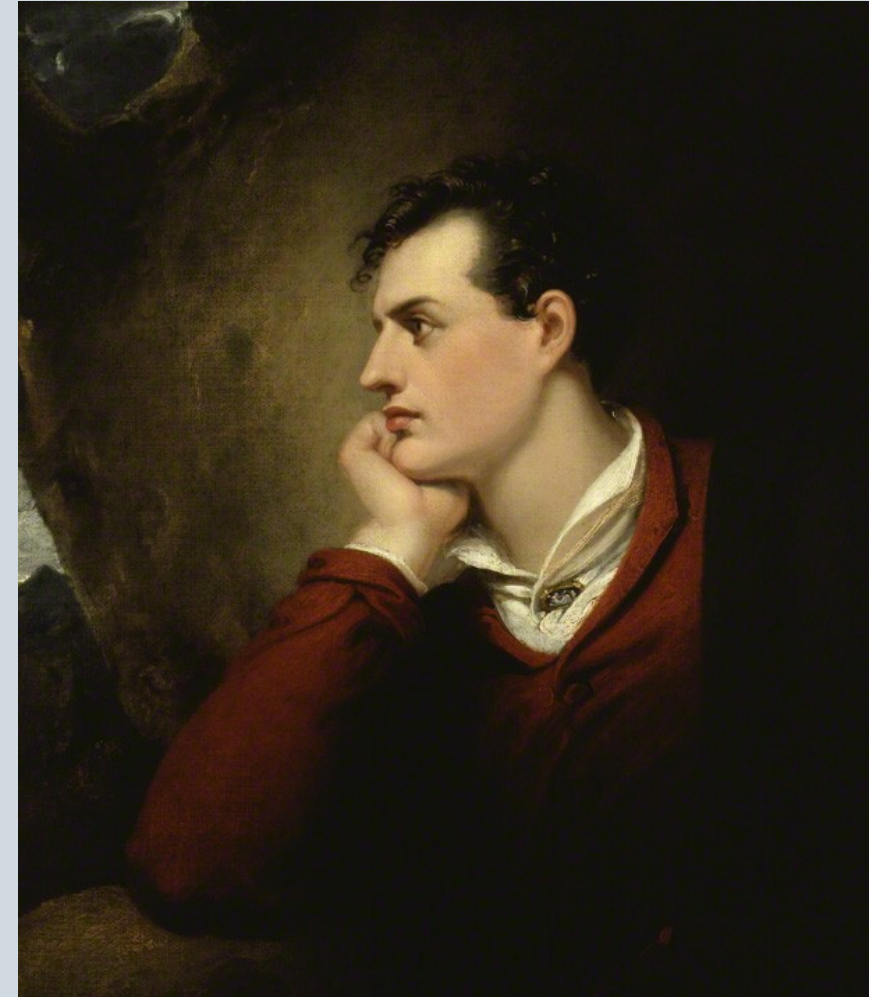
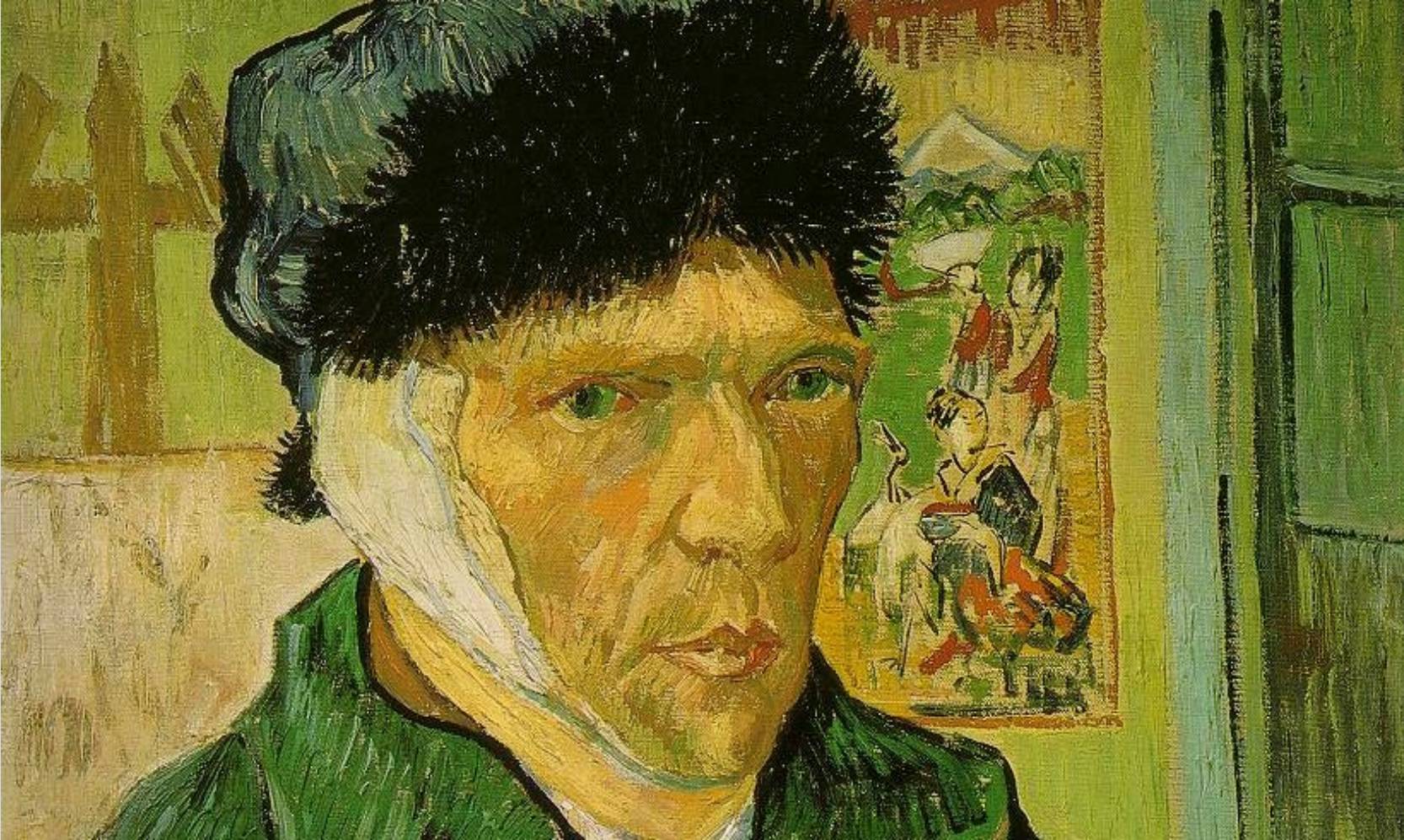
# The birth of copyright law

1710: the Statute of Anne

It now becomes possible to own ideas.

- Originality
- A single originator
- Subsumption in the signature





# Industrialisation and Romanticism

The economic world reversed



# Art vs. Commerce

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The binary of “selling out”:



- Sold out “of something” – financial success
- But also: sold out “to the man”
- (Sold out “outside the proper audience”)

## The world of art: Who legitimizes?

There is social prestige and power (cultural capital) in recognizing “true” art and artists.

The canon is negotiated through multiple agents and institutions in the art world: artists, producers, critics, exhibitors – and academics.

# A new movie canon

As chosen by Amma Asante, Lynne Ramsay, Gurinder Chadha and more



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## May's choice

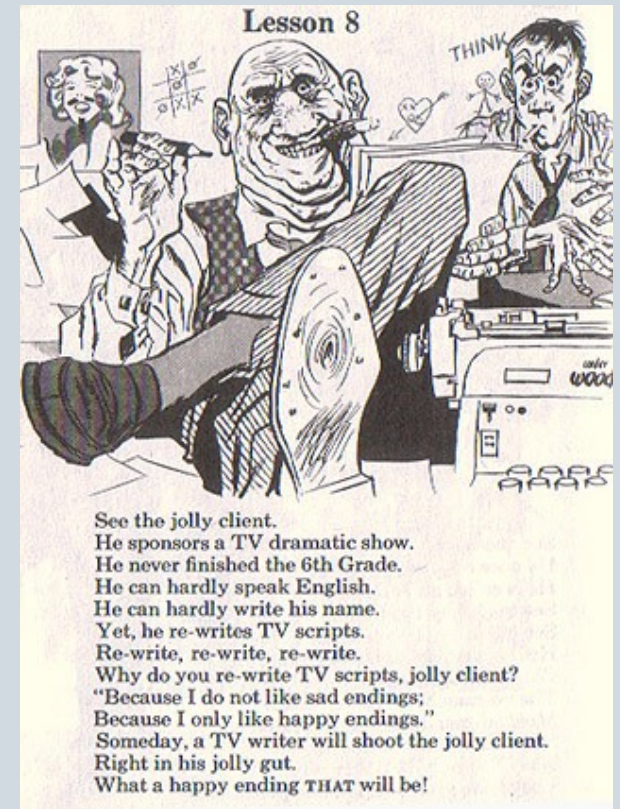
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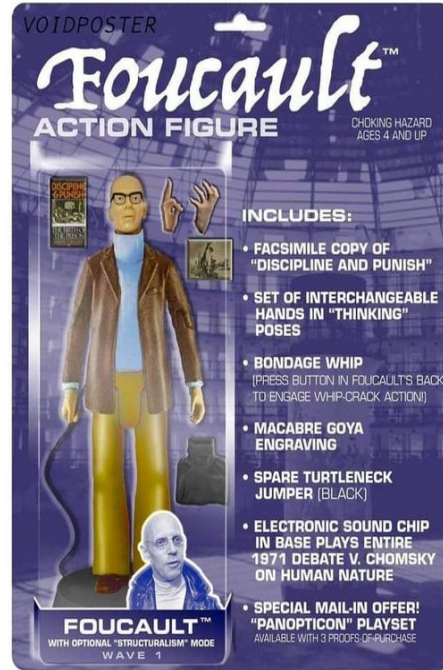
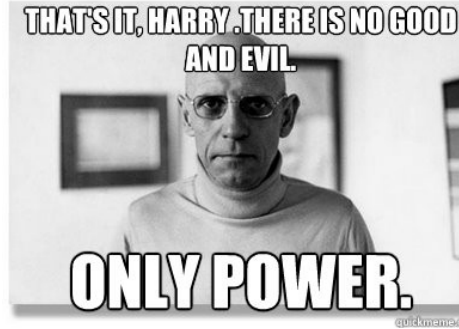
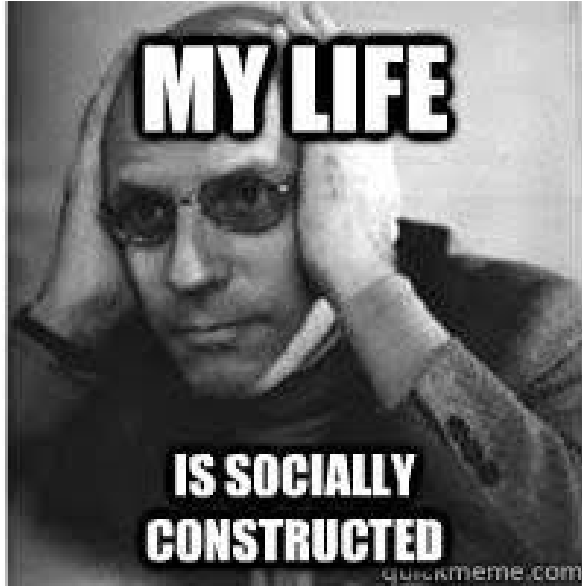


# Cultural discourses of creativity

- ∅ **Individual:** The authentic artwork is the product of a singular genius
- ∅ **Independent:** Free of interference by outsiders
- ∅ **Not motivated by profit** but by the desire for self-expression
- ∅ **Extraordinary:** The purview of unique individuals working under unique conditions

This has real implications for the legal and social dimensions of cultural labour






# The uses of authorship

## Foucault: The author function

- Removed from the author as an embodied individual
- Used separately from a proper name
- Used to discuss texts and relationships between texts
- Used to group, categorise and find coherence within texts and groups of texts
- Acts within a legal system: “objects of appropriation”

“These aspect of an individual, which we designate as an author [...] are projections [...] of our way of handling texts: in the comparisons we make, the traits we extract as pertinent, the continuities we assign, or the exclusions we practice.”



THE  
Walt Disney  
SIGNATURE COLLECTION



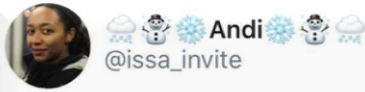
Disney

# Authorship and branding

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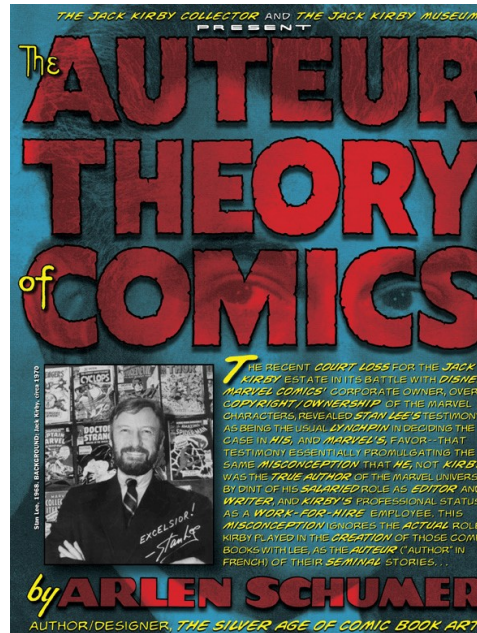
“Both the aesthetic of the signature and the aesthetic of the brand are ideologies: they are regimes of marketing and authorization which draw in rather similar ways on an imaginary of the unique person or of personality. [...] The dual economies of value that underpin all cultural production may exist in tension, and their disjunction is the rationale for the privileged status of ‘high’ art in its self-understanding as a disinterested culture unaffected by market pressure. But the historical logic of the brand was always already implicit in the aesthetics of the signature.”

John Frow, “Signature and Brand,” in *High-Pop: Making Culture into Public Entertainment*, ed. Jim Collins (Malden, Mass: Blackwell, 2002), p71-72.



Andi @issa\_invite

The problem with having so much media that correlates being a genius with being an unlikable asshole (ex. Rick and Morty) is that men start to think that because they're unlikable assholes, they Must Be smarter than everyone else



## The Auteur Theory of Music Video Means No More Pretty Clichés

By MARGOT MIFFLIN

WHEN MTV APPEARED IN August 1981, the art world watched with a hopeful but skeptical eye — hopeful that the four-minute audio-visual format could become a vanguard genre born of the marriage of music and moving images.

**A handful of film makers and visual artists are defying MTV conventions.**

music video is a nearly closed circuit, set got in because I had a reputation as an artist," says Mr. Lingo. "It's almost impossible for women and unknowns to do that."  
Mr. Lingo made his first video, Lily's "Ray (Go)," as a favor to a friend, Zetton Flyer of the Golden Palominos. The video caught the attention of New Order, which asked him to shoot "Bizarre Love Triangle." The result was an expressionistic clip with

# The author today?

An enduring myth: a cornerstone of culture

- Present in ever more spaces: television, video games, digital media

But subject to criticism:

- The fetishization of genius in neoliberalism
- The gendered genius: excuse for abuse?

# Discussion:

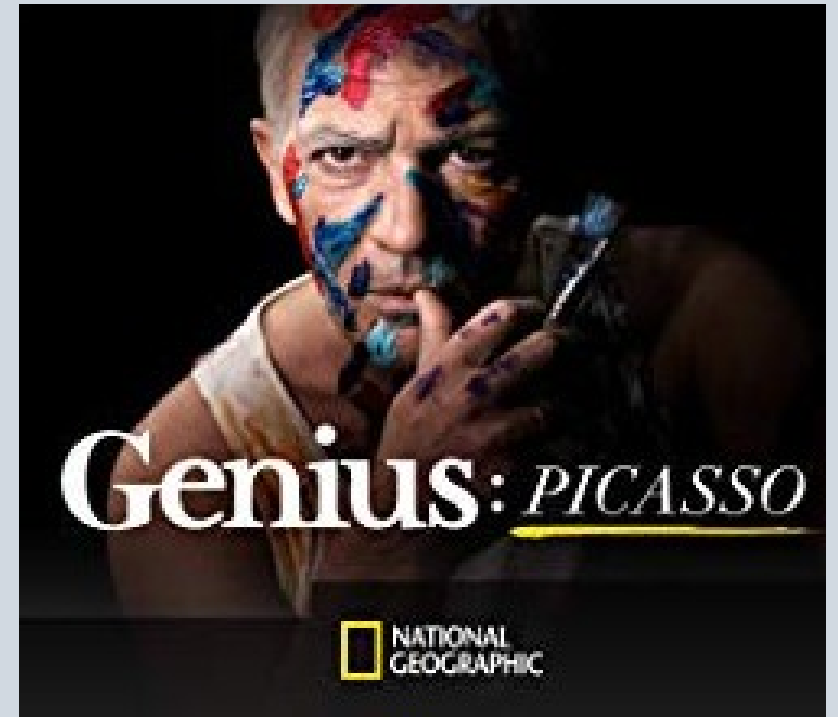
## Deconstructing the Artistic Genius?

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“Do we really expect our artists to be paragons? Because if we do, we are not just going to be very disappointed, we are going to be stuck with a lot of mediocre art.” - Neil McCormick

"In the same way we think about where our fruit comes from or where our potatoes come from, you need to be asking where your entertainment is coming from. Who's making it? How many asses were grabbed in the name of making this movie or getting this show out or putting this record out?" - Wesley Morris

- Where do you encounter the discourse of artistic genius in everyday life?
- What are its benefits and disadvantages? What does it mean for us as a culture?
- Do we need new models for creativity?



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFw\\_4L09ANw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFw_4L09ANw)