

## In Defense of the Author

R.F. Tripp

Nowadays the author is supposed to be dead, and I say good riddance. But then I think, No, no, what if *I* become an author? Then *I* would be dead (well, “dead,” of course, but still). Personally, I would prefer to be surrounded by smartly dressed, tailored-up women at cocktail parties asking me how I did that, write that *one particular passage*, and would I like to meet somewhere sometime for lunch, so we could talk, you know, about the work. *Or*, be interviewed on Public Radio by Diane Rehm, who *also* wants to explore that *one particular passage* that, well, frankly, I can’t remember writing (I think she said it was on page 317). But I could finesse my way through that because I would be thinking about some gorgeous woman somewhere listening as she drove to her attorney’s (make that attorneys’) office in her Mercedes, something about a new distribution from her family’s trust she should have gotten and, well, it was a minor oversight, but for her not to worry because they had already deposited the check in her account. Or maybe I would already *be* at a restaurant, dining alone, because frankly I was tired of *not* dining alone, at least some, and it would be at that point when I was having coffee and reading the *Times Literary Supplement*—something about me—well, not me per se but me-my-work (the one Diane Rehm wouldn’t stop talking about), and the critic had gotten it all wrong (an author should know) but still my head is swirling in self-doubt, or maybe it’s self-pity (sometimes it’s hard to tell which) and just at the moment when I’m beginning to think maybe I’m *not* an author after all, the woman in the Mercedes and the trust taps me on the shoulder, and I turn and I see she has a pen in one hand and a piece of paper in the other, and would I please, *please*, sign it, because she is on her way to her book club, and all the other ladies are going to *kill* her when she shows it to them, and then on another piece of paper she discreetly gives me her cell number, and I’m thinking, okay, she’s not all that young, but I’m betting she was a beauty when she was at St. Something-Or-Other Prep, her senior year, so of course I sign, and take the number, out of courtesy—I mean, who knows—but now I know once and for all that *this* author is not dead, which should settle the argument of authorial existence (if not intent), and if you’re still flesh and blood what difference does it make? Anyway, she leaves, and I flag down the waiter. I’ve gotta find that passage.