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A Meta-History of Collaborative Literary Creation and the Politics of Control

Introduction

A well known professor of English and Communications asked me if I honestly believed that it was possible for a committee to write a great book. In attempting to answer his question, minimal research clearly demonstrated that the answer to his question is a resounding yes--many, even most, of the greatest works of literature, across time, across culture, and across language, are explicitly attributed to groups. As collaborative writing has gained scholarly attention in the previous thirty years, many texts long-considered the product of singular authorship are now understood to to product of collaborative processes. If I had the time, energy, and ability, I would prepare a laundry list of the greatest works of world literature and the role that collaborative processes played in their creations. Perhaps such a list is the answer that the well known scholar in my introduction is looking for.

However, my research has demonstrated that the nature of collaboration is so persistent, so important, and so dynamic that it first begs several questions in response. How can prominent academics overlook collaborative literary work in this blatant manner? As the academic world sits proudly upon a tradition of synthesis, knowledge sharing, peer review, and editing, what set of political, social, and philosophical structures makes overlooking the importance of group work so easy for today's most observant literary minds? What is so important to and intertwined with our fundamental understanding of literary creation that it convinces even some of our greatest literary scholars to depreciate, discredit, and ignore one of the most historically effective methods of literary creation?

To answer this question, we must note that any academic or literary predisposition against collaboration is relatively a recent phenomena. We know that, to some degree, almost every major work written before the end of the Renaissance was the product of multiple hands. For millennia, texts were the projects of communities, not individuals. As a result, ideas and texts [1] were the property (if the term is even applicable) of God or mankind; they formed a sort of intellectual commons from which all new knowledge would pull and into which all new knowledge would flow. During the eighteenth and nighteenth centuries, this concept of authorship and the mechanisms for literary production, control, and ownership were overhauled, depreciated, and tossed aside. Literature became the property of individuals.

In different forms and models, collaborative creation persisted. Over time, increasingly powerful regimes of control defined new genres and new terms for creative collaboration. Limited by the terms set by regimes of control and the context of a property-driven literary industry shaped by copyright, collaborative authorship has persisted.

This essay will examine a handful of particularly well documented historical examples of collaborative literary creation. The goal is not to create the exhaustive laundry list mentioned above but to be attempt to be representative of changes in the nature of popular collaborative literary models. For most literary works--especially older texts--drafts, manuscripts and journals documenting the nature of collaboration are unavailable. With a lack of documentation to the contrary, modern scholars assume singular authorship. Hopefully, my argument, supported by others that have influenced and inspired it, will help shed doubt on the wisdom of this assumption.

As a *meta-history*, this essay has two goals that imply my third and primary *meta*-goal. First, I want to sketch a basic introduction to discussions on authorship and the history of copyright. Second, I hope to use historical examples to hint at the persistence and power of collaborative work. I will use evidence to demonstrate that collaboration is a theme that has dominated the world's literary history both before and after the institutionalization of systems of control. The meta-history lies somewhere in the intersection. The history of copyright read in relationship to the history of collaboration is the meta-history of this of conflict.

1. I'm using the term *texts* loosely. I intend to include oral forms of "literature" like Homer's epic poetry.

The myth of Romantic creation, the idea of a genius conjuring unique and fully-formed ideas from within herself, provides the backbone and justification for current regimes of strong literary control. Intellectual property, articulated as parallel to other forms of property, must be owned by an individual.[2] The rise and evolution of copyright as we know it today can be read in relationship to the decline and devolution of collaborative literary creation. By tracing this relationship, the emergent meta-history can act as the foundation for a larger argument for collective or collaborative control of work with the goal of promoting or facilitating widespread collaborative creatiion.

The basis for this discourse began in 1969 when Michel Foucault famously asked, *What is an Author?* For the first time, Foucault drew attention to a shift in the definition of an "author's" role that represented a "privileged moment of *individualization* in the history of ideas, knowledge, literature, philosophy, and the sciences." Scholars and theorists of various academic disciplines have spent the last thirty years responding to Foucault in what has grown into a vibrant intellectual discourse on authorship. While clear conclusions and definitive answers are no closer than they were in 1969, much has been said about the fact that the importance, role, and definition of *authorship* has undergone major changes since the beginning of the eighteenth century.

One of the foremost participants in the discussion is Martha Woodmansee who explains, in one of numerous essays on the subject, that the notion that the author is the only participant in the production of a book worthy of attention and special rights--as opposed to just another craftsman--is rooted in the Romantic notion that significant writers, "break altogether with tradition to create something utterly new, unique--in a word, 'original'" (16).

Before the rise of this Romantic notion, new writing gained value from its creative affiliation with existing works, "its derivation rather than its deviation from prior texts" (Woodmansee 17). Before this shift, the author's role was often compared to that of a commentator, compiler,

2. For the purposes of property, intellectual or otherwise, the individual need not be a person. Under most countries' laws, corporations act as individuals and hold similar rights. Like other forms of property, intellectual property can be transfered, or bought, from an individual by a corporation. This will be discussed in more detail later in this essay.

or transcriber. Contextualized in such a way, it comes at little surprise that authors' roles in this period were intensely collaborative.

The eigheenth cenutry introduced a new concept of individualized authorship based on the idea of a creative genius working alone. This idea--one at odds with collaborative, collective, or corporate creation--has remained widely influential in spite of powerful arguments made by theorists like Foucault and Woodmansee and a growing body of evidence that collaborative and collective creation is more effective than solitary work and that it has remained undeniably persistent. Peter Jaszi and a growing numbers of other legal and literary theorists argue that it is copyright, a system designed to allow economic and political control of literary knowledge and expression, that has enshrined Romantic creativity in ways that have been difficult to challenge.

These systems of copyright grew out a tradition of "privilege" where monarchs would grant exclusive monopoly rights for the production of a particular text to a particular printer--usually without consultation of the text's author or authors. In England, this widespread practice eventually led to the creation of the Stationers' Company, a coalition of English printers that were granted--through an interesting combination of royal privilege and censorship policy--a monopoly on all printed material in England in return for an agreement to not print seditious or heretical material. While antecedent to copyright, the system was fundamentally different; while individual printers were granted exclusive rights to works, authors were neither mentioned or consulted.

An important shift came in 1710 when this system was replaced with the, "Act for the Encouragement of Learning and the Securing the Property of Copies of Books to the Rightful Owners Thereof," commonly referred to as the "1710 Copyright Act" or the "Statute of Queen Anne." The statute provided *authors* with exclusive rights to their works for fourteen years, extensible by another fourteen years if the author was still alive and cared to renew. In reality, and by design, authors' rights were immediately transfered to publishers--the legislation was lobbied for and supported by publishers alone. In the famous *Donaldson v. Beckett* (1774) court case, the law recognized authors *natural* copyright as common law but decided that the 1710 Copyright Act supplanted this right with a statutory one.[3]

However, as time went on, authors, perhaps most notably William Wordsworth (who I'll examine in more detail later in this essay) argued for this "natural" right to to their artistic productions by connecting the model of Romantic creativity dependent on the, "introduction of a new element into the intellectual universe," to their desire to have more control over the use of their ideas (Zall 182, Woodmansee 1984 427, Jaszi 35). Wordsworth went so far as to argue for the institution of these rights in front of Parliament. While the legislation in question was never passed, he successfully popularized his conception of authorship, the eventual dominance of which led to a major shift in popular conceptions of authorship.

In a causal reversal, this Romantic concept of authorship began to shape the way the courts and governments approached and applied copyright. In this way, the Romantic conception of authorship enshrined the concept of individual creation in ways that, in the best situations, decreases the importance of collaborative work collaborative work, and in the worst, were squarely at odds with its widespread application and continuation.

Early Models of Collaboration Before the Eighteenth Century

Before the shift that Foucault refers to as an "individualization" of authorship, explicit and deep collaboration was the dominant method of literary production. Martha Woodmansee notes that even an author working alone would be viewed as just another collaborator in the production of a finished book that included paper-makers, scribes, printers, rubricators, and binders. Authors durings these times saw themselves as a piece within a larger system.

Woodmansee describes the role of the author before the dominance of Romantic authorship as not dissimilar to other types of literary creators like scribes, compilers, or commentators. Woodmansee references a definition by the thirteenth century St. Bonaventure who describes an author as one who, "wrote both with his own work and others' but with his own work in the princi-

3. An author's "natural" rights to their works are those that can not be sold or transfered. The doctrine of natural rights claims that these rights connect an author to their work and *can not* be taken away. While natural copyright plays a role in many European copyright traditions, most notably France, the rights are essentially non-existent in the United States.

ple place adding others' for purposes of confirmation"(1994 17). This thirteenth-century definition of authorship places literary creation squarely within the context of collaborative work and other collaborative forms of writing.

In another article, Woodmansee explore the European pre-copyright methods of compensation for artistic work. To preface the discussion, she notes that that the concept of the professional writer is relatively recent innovation. Before this period, writing was completed largely as a part time occupation (Woodmansee 1984 431). Most early professional writers were supported by honorarium, or a payment to an author to produce works that was given either by printers or by a king or nobel. Honorarium was the mechanism of patronage. This honorarium, rather than payment in exchange for exclusive transfer of work, was a mark of esteem and a method for a printer or sovereign who appreciated or benefited from the works, to ensure the continued work of the author. Payments bore no relation to exchange value or an acknowledgment of the writer's achievements. It was usually a fixed sum that did not fluctuate with the publication of new works (Woodmansee 1984 434-5).

Through creation by non-professional writers and through the support of authors through honorarium, the constant production of new work was insured without the need for system of intellectual property or ownership. This was essential, because the dominant models of literary creation were fundamentally intertwined with borrowing and collaboration in ways that system of ownership and propriety would complicate and hinder.

One example of this model is described in a recent book, *To Steal a Book is an Elegant Offense*, where the author, William P. Alford, attempts to explain why China had no laws resembling western intellectual property law or copyright until the twentieth century. Alford argues that the Chinese refused to adopt intellectual property policy because it was fundamentally incompatible with Chinese literature's basis in a creative process that elevated and necessitated borrowing, synthesis, and quotation--in a word: collaboration.

It is clear that the production of knowledge and literature in Imperial China was shaped by an intimate engagement with the work of others--especially ones predecessors. Drawing from the work of the noted Chinese literary scholar Stephen Owen, Alford makes generalizations about Imperial Chinese literature describing the the way that in order to, “avail themselves of understanding in order to guide their own behavior, subsequent [Chinese] generations had to interact with the past in a sufficiently thorough manner so as to be able to transmit it” (25). Owen compares the importance of this connection to the past in Chinese literature to the attention to meaning or truth in the Western literary tradition (Alford 26).

To reinforce his claims, Alford quotes passages from influential Chinese thinkers spanning several centuries. A passage in the *Analects of Confucius* states: “The Master [Confucius] said: I transmit rather than create; I believe in and love the Ancients” (bk 7, ch.1). More than a millennium later, As Wu Li (1631-1718) claimed that, “to paint without taking the Sung and Yuan masters as one’s basis is like playing chess on an empty chessboard, without pieces” (28). Separated by epochs, both thinkers decry the idea of artistic creation in a vacuum. To each, the organization and creation of new knowledge, literary or otherwise, must reach outward rather than inward.

Alford’s examples are interesting because they are employed not in the context of a discussion of Chinese literature but a discussion of intellectual property and control--or the lack thereof. Alford argues that Imperial Chinese literature was rooted in a conception of authorship that identified the author as a craftsman and a historian. Authors assembled and connected existing pieces of literature in the creation of new works; no good author, even one secluded in the woods, would working alone. Consequently, originality was defined not in the context of a lack of influence but from a context of a rich meaningful interaction with existing knowledge. In the absence of a meaningful collaborative literary process--with authors both living and dead--Chinese authors would fail to be effective or “original”.

Alford’s conclusion is that without free and unhindered access to the works of others, especially one’s predecessors, this type of collaboration and model of literary creation is impossible. As a result, the popular Imperial Chinese conception of authorship was incompatible with the

Western system of copyright based on Romantic authorship. The relatively recent institution of copyright in China gives us a unique opportunity to explore collaborative artistic creation in the recent past and gain insight into the European history of creative models before the widespread adoption of modern systems of control. In simple terms, the Chinese experience demonstrates a model not dissimilar to one that Europeans enjoyed before the widespread adoption of copyright.

A more familiar example of a collaboratively created text from antiquity is the Jewish Talmud. In its simplest form, the Talmud is a compilation of ancient Jewish law and lore created by large groups of Palestinian and Babylonian rabbis between the late first and seventh centuries A.D. As such, the texts relevance in the context of a discussion of collaborative creation and control needs no further justification. Still, the Talmud is particularly interesting because, as an important religious text, it's history is extremely well researched. However, unlike most other Holy texts, the collaborative nature of it's creation is not downplayed in this research but it is in fact highlighted and essential to its form and function.

Pages of the Talmud, called folios, are separated into blocks and pieces. Many folios include the *Mishna*, or bits of traditional law, transmitted and altered orally for centuries until it was transcribed (into numerous differing copies) at some point before the middle of the sixth century (Strack 20). Flanking the Mishna on each folio are other texts, the majority of which constitute commentary and criticism. While much of the commentary is on the Mishna, much of it forms commentary on the other commentaries.

Detailing the nature of the collaborative process that produced the Talmud is a tedious and confusing process attempted over centuries by historians and Talmudic scholars. Recently, these have included Hermann L. Strack who published an English-language *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*. Drawing from his introduction, it is clear that the creation of the Talmud spanned centuries, perhaps millennia, and in its current form represents the intellectual work of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Rabbis, thinkers, and jurists.

As such, the Talmud, cultivated and created over centuries, is not the product of a single collaborative model. Until relatively recently, the Talmud was not even a single text. Strack argues that there was never a uniform text and that differences persisted and multiplied as the Talmud was rarely read or copied but more commonly recited from memory (77). Much of Strack's early history is concerned with tracing the oral transmission and growth of the law that eventually became the basis for the Talmud--a process that was inherently collaborative (8-25).[4] The Talmudic model is one where, as is still the case today, criticism and commentary of the existing text is encouraged. However, unlike contemporary literary models, the best criticism was incorporated into the text itself. Although its form has now been frozen, the Talmud was designed to be a dynamic document--a literary conversation over centuries.

The basis of the Talmud is law that belonged to all Jewish people. This law was based on concepts that were borrowed from other groups and cultures. While scholars have attempted to pin authorship for pieces of the Mishna on individual rabbis, they do not deny that it is the articulation of centuries of communal Jewish knowledge. It was able to grow and change with time (either intentionally or unintentionally through errors in memory) *because it belonged to everyone*. As rabbis and thinkers wrote commentaries on the text and on commentaries of their predecessors, they freely pulled from and added to the existing text. While, as in any discussion, clear attribution played an important role, control and ownership did not. The existence of divergent texts demonstrates that, over time, the books audience felt free to change the text to make it more effective and relevant.

In this way, the Talmud represents the popular early literary model of a text as a conversation. [5] In the case of the Talmud, this concept has persisted, to some degree, up until today. In his *Invitation to the Talmud*, Jacob Neusner repeatedly describes the Talmud as a discussion and invites his readers to join in the collaborative process by reading, unraveling, reshaping, revising,

4. Walter Ong, an expert in oral "literature" is the author of several books and articles on the subject of oral transmission, the resulting textual changes, and nature of collaboration on oral "texts". Unfortunately, this important literary model lies outside this essay's scope. Ong's *Orality and Literary* may be a good place to start further exploration of the subject.

5. Other examples of this model include the *Glossa Ordinaria* and the popular medieval genre of "annotations."

improving, recontextualizing, and then applying the concepts in the Talmud in their own lives (26). He connects this invitation to conversation with the fact that, “Every Talmudic tractate..begins on page 2; there are no page 1’s because there is no beginning” (29). With it’s conversational quality and with no beginning and (one must assume) no end, the Talmud exists as a text that is designed to be the product and material for a continuing collaborative process that ensures its continued organic growth.

While tradition, and perhaps changing conceptions of authorship, have frozen the text of the Talmud in its current state, it’s organic existence continues. Neusner’s own book reproduces pages of the Talmud and engages in commentary and explication--it produces a new work with the existing texts and commentaries as its core. Unfortunately, bound by copyright and strong system of control, Neusner’s own work does not facilitate the same type of criticism and and commentary that it is based on.

While both Imperial Chinese literature and the Talmudic tradition ground themselves on collaborative processes modeled after a conversation between new and existing texts, they are hardly the only models of pre-copyright collaborative work. Other models include texts that were explicitly designed to be, “created by committee.” Foremost among these examples, is the King James Version of the English Bible (KJV). As such, if I had to highlight a single text in my response to the English professor mentioned in the introduction, it would be KJV.

The King James Version is a translation of the existing Bible, a book which is, humanly speaking, is a text of multiple and composite authorship on an unprecedented scale. The books of the Old and New Testaments are explicitly attributed to over forty men from a diverse range of backgrounds--from kings to laborers--writing from between 1500 B.C.E. through 97 C.E.[6] After only a glimpse of the collaborative processes behind the work, it comes as little surprise that believers refer to the product and process as miraculous.

6. Ongoing scholarship suggests that many of these men, including Moses, may themselves be composites; it implies the hands of uncountable unattributed authors and unattributable traditional sources, lore, and legend. Of course, this is in addition to the role played by scholars acting as “editors” including the Septuagint (itself made up of 70 collaborators), Origen, Jerome, Eusebius and Augustine. Each helped give the text form by comparing and consolidating divergent copies in attempts to assemble a “true” version (Gaebelein 18).

Given this rich collaborative foundation, it should come as little surprise that collaborative efforts have been employed in the most revered translations. This is evident in the paradigmatic case of the King James Version of the English Bible: the most popular Bible translation and, by many estimates, the single most influential text in the English literary canon. The collaborative process responsible for the KJV was already centuries underway when the translation was commanded by King James at the Hampton Court Conference in 1604.[7] At the end of a century that gave birth to six separate English Bible translations, King James, prompted by Dr. John Rainolds (also spelled Reynolds), President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, set the wheels in motion for the creation of yet another translation (Daiches 65). Several months later, King James informed English bishops that he had appointed, “four and fifty men,” (of which we know the names of only forty-seven) and had called for suggestions, clarifications, or specific insight from “learned men” anywhere in England.

The committee assembled was, “catholic and intelligent on the whole, including most of the ablest men available, whether High Church or Puritan” (Daiches 67). This ideologically diverse group was divided into six sub-groups which met at Westminster, Oxford, and Cambridge. Each location housed a group translating the Old and New Testaments. Each scholar translated the same piece of text as his colleagues before the small groups compared versions and created a rendering that was then forwarded to a final committee of revisers. This final committee referred to works in Greek, Latin, Hebrew, French, Spanish, Italian and other languages making use, “of ancient and modern translations...and consulting the old manuscripts that were available” to arrive the most informed decision possible (Gaebelein 67-69).

The results of this process of creation by committee while not an instant success, where nothing short of astounding. Frank Gaebelein describes KJV as, “the crown of our literature,” and

7. KJV is derived from the Geneva Bible (1560) and the Bishops Bible (1568) which in turn had The Great Bible (1539) and Matthews Bible (1537) as antecedents. Work antecedent to these includes translations by John Wycliffe and William Tyndale. The translations by both Wycliffe and Tyndale were themselves collaborative processes: Wycliffe’s work was finished by collaborators after he was martyred and Tyndale’s work assisted and eventually completed by John Rogus, Miles Coverdale and others. Pieces of KJV can be positively traced to the very first manuscript translations of the Bible into English.

argues that the translation offers, “one of those rare cases where superlatives are not only justified but demanded” (22, 72). He goes on to describe it as, “immortal poetry, enduring in beauty because it reflects so truly the inspired original” (75). The translation is, and continues to be each year, the highest selling Bible translation worldwide.

KJV succeeded where Wycliffe’s, Tyndale’s, Bishops’, and Matthew’s Bibles failed because it employed more translators, more scholars, and more input from the greater educated community; its success was insured by it’s unprecedented collaborative creative process. It’s position has only been challenged by translations that both incorporate the work of previous translators (including the KJV committee) and the work of large numbers of contemporary others.

The scholars producing KJV were funded through the system of honorarium mentioned previously. They borrowed at will from existing Bible translations and from their peers. The product of their work was the property of the entire community--neither they nor anyone else owned the translation. [8] KJV succeeded where singularly (or even less collaboratively) authored translations failed because it was the product and process of intense collaboration. The freedom to collaborate not only ensured the persisted popularity of KJVover almost four centuries, but provided the foundation for several derivative translations including the popular Revised Version and the American Standard Version (ASV).

KJV, the Talmud, and Imperial Chinese literature serve as impressive symbols of the power of early collaborative processes. It is clear that the production of all three would be impossible by any individual. However, they are also symbols of the power of the unhindered access to information, knowledge, and existing works that facilitated their collaborative creation. Collaboration on the scale necessary to assemble the Talmud or KJV *must* be executed in an environment where the type of widespread borrowing and textual synthesis employed in the creation these texts is possible and even encouraged. Copyright and systems of intellectual property are fundamentally at odds with the type of freedoms necessary to produce such works.

8. While the King could control the printing of work by granting royal *privileges* to individual printers, even he was not the *owner* of any text.

Collaboration During the Birth and Early Life of Copyright

As I mentioned in my introduction, the Statute of Anne in 1710 did not mark an instantaneous shift in attitudes toward authorship and artistic creation. At its birth, copyright was lobbied for and designed to benefit publishers alone. For at least the first century of its institution, authors continued to write in the ways they had before. They borrowed as they had before; they collaborated as they had before; they plagiarized as they had before. Collaboration in the forms popularized before the institution of copyright remained popular.

However, by selling the rights to their ideas, authors saw a new system of compensation for their work: a way to "live by their pen." They realized that by solidifying their access to these rights, they might insure their ability to make a living. This coincided, and was intimately connected, with the explosive growth of the publishing industry in Europe. Authors felt they needed to insure compensation for their intellectual productions and saw their copyright, described in the Statute of Anne and similar acts in other countries, as an available method for achieving this goal.

To emphasize the importance of copyright--which was initially created in service of publishers--authors, led by Romantic poets in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, introduced a new conception of authorship. These authors must have been aware that the collaborative nature of their literary production sat in direct opposition to Calls for the institutionalizatino of control systems justified by conceptions of Romantic authorship. Perhaps authorship was defined in terms relative to the previous system of unhindered borrowing and collaboration. In any case, these authors seemed comfortable with the hypocrisy of their position.

Keats was one such poet who espoused a Romantic conception of authorship while employing collaborative practices in the creation of his poems. However, Keats explicitly placed his poetry within a larger social context of its creation, revision, reception and influence. During the the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the mechanisms for collaborative creation took explicit form in the formulation of coterie groups of writers that acted as forums for idea interchange, discussion, manuscript circulation, critique and small-scale publishing.[9]

9. Deciding what level and type of interaction defines a "group" and the level and type of affiliation that

Steeped in this culture of collaboration, Keats himself was influential in the creation, promotion, and continuation of several such groups. The most famous, and consequently most well documented, was the now famous "Cockney School," that included, at different times in its life, the company of Shelly, Byron, Keats, Hunt, Reynolds, Smith and Hazlitt. Through their letters and correspondence, it is clear that each of these poets turned to associations and interactions within the group as a means of cultural production (Cox 4). While the nature of the association was unstated, unclear, and inconsistent--some shared, borrowed, or took advantage of the association more than others--we know that this group of artists, writers, and intellectuals conceived of itself as a coherent circle, "something between a manuscript coterie circle...and [a] kind of self-consciously avant-grade movement" (20-21).

We also know that Leigh Hunt provided the nexus around which the group was organized. Hunt published several journals, most notable among them was *the Examiner*, organized coterie meetings, played host to poets, artists and intellectuals and ran his much maligned sonnet contests to encourage the creation and critique of new works. In each of these ways, Hunt provided a public space for the discussion and exchange of idea necessary for his ideal literary process, one that that took part in a socialized scene (Cox 7). The group's collective work included the production of commonplace books[10], collaborative projects, and "contest" poems as well as major individually attributed efforts which were executed in the context of, and with the assistance of, the members of the group through a system of manuscript circulation and revision.

The influence of members of this group on each other is described in detail by Jeffrey N. Cox in *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School* in a thorough analysis of themes, images, characters and plots shared between members of the group and through explicit affiliation in dedications

inclusion implies is an important job but not one that I will attempt in this essay. In his introduction to the *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School*, Jeffrey N. Cox discusses and defines groups and then argues that the Cockney School does indeed qualify as such an organization of writers.

10. Commonplace books were books in which records were made of things to be remembered and which formed an extremely popular, if personal, genre during the Renaissance and the following centuries. When a reader discovered a passage or poem that they found particularly appealing, they would transcribe it into their commonplace book. These books represented an important mechanism and document of the type of influence, information exchange, and collaboration in the period.

and inter-textual references. For example, Cox describes connections from every poem in Keats' 1817 *Poems* to at least one other members of the group. He draws parallels along shared ideas, especially political ones and employs evidence of political, economic, and literary support between group members (84).

While Cox's books acts as an analysis of the collaborative relationships that gave birth to the ideas and themes behind Keats' poetry, Jack Stillinger, in *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary Genius*, explores the nature of the collaborative system of revision and production at play in the stylistic creation and evolution of Keats' *Sonnet to Sleep* and *Isabella*. In both cases, Keats' friends and publishers were instrumental in the creation of the finished product (Stillinger 17-21, 29-45). *Isabella*, with a nearly exhaustive set of revisions available to historians, provides a particularly useful example of the collaborative processes at work in Keats' poetry.

Isabella was first written and then revised once by Keats with the input from friends and colleagues including J. H. Reynolds. It was then passed to Richard Woodhouse who originally copied the poem into shorthand before re-expanding it and introducing several changes in wording and punctuation in the process. He subsequently revised it twice. Woodhouse's second version served as the printers copy when the poem was first published (Stillinger 26-29). Handwriting from the poem's printer, John Taylor, is also visible in the final manuscript version (29). Keats' collaborators made additions, deletions, rewordings and wholesale rewritings while prompting Keats to make other revisions on his own (34). These revisions were often made independently--and perhaps divergently--of Keats' surmisable intentions (39). Other alterations appear to have been made by Keats, Woodhouse, and Taylor working together (44). The contributions were so substantial and the contributors so passionate and involved that Stillinger claims that the collaborators demonstrated a proprietary interest in the work.

Stillinger notes that while none of Keats' collaborators' changes deal with theme, character, or plot, it is the stylist nature of the poetry that they focused on that make up the acknowledged, "Keatsian" qualities of the work (30). Cox argue that Keats' association with the Cockney School reveal that the theme, character, plot and messages of Keats poem are also rooted in collaborative associations. If readers are to believe both Cox and Stillinger, as I believe is warranted, we must approach Keats as having communicated collaboratively conceived messages and themes through collaborative mechanisms.

This is a far cry from the ideal of Romantic authorship usually attributed to Keats and his contemporaries. Many Romantic scholars have attempted to downplay both the importance of the coterie process and the role of the collaborative revisions. In some cases, they've gone so far as to blame Keats' early or weaker poetry on collective processes while elevating his later work as the product of his unrestrained Romantic individualism (Cox 13). In reality, Keats' collaborative relationships played such an essential role throughout his creative life, that he returned to live with Hunt, his primary collaborator, during his final illness (84).

As Keats penned his poems, copyright had already begun to enshrine the concept of Romantic authorship. As a result, Keats, while he worked in massively collaborative processes, took sole responsibility for the work. At the time, his close literary associations and his collaborative relationships with friends and publishers were unstated because they were assumed; there was an acknowledged discrepancy between the way authors created and the way they drafted their bylines. However, this unwritten information has been lost with time or simply ignored by critics and scholars. It is only through recent historical work by researchers like Cox and Stillinger that the collaborative nature of Keats work has been revealed.

As a result of this type of research, Keats' widespread collaboration becomes clear. It is also clear that the collaborative processes were facilitated through Keats' lack of total control over the poems. While Keats had a limited copyright to this work, he showed little interest in and demonstrated little control over texts themselve, he "almost certainly" did *not* read the final printers proofs--with full knowledge that his printer made editorial and stylist changes. This attitude, unsurprising in a literary culture steeped in collaboration, allowed Keats' collaborators unhindered access to the poetry and cultivated the culture of collaboration and critique that made the type of cooperation possible that helped Keats create to his best ability--one greater than Keats working alone.

This culture of cooperation is mirrored in the literary lives of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth a generation before. Like Keats, the pair produced many of their literary works through intensely collaborative methods. Also like Keats, criticism steeped in the ideology of Romantic authorship has attempted to dismiss the importance of collaboration in their work. Unlike Keats, Wordsworth and Coleridge played a huge role in the Romanticization of their poetry and processes. Wordsworth promoted the ideal of Romantic authorship emphatically and is largely responsible for the Romantic way in which critics now approach his work.

That said, *Lyrical Ballads*, with poems by Wordsworth and Coleridge is probably the most famous coauthored book in the English language. The idea of collaboration by Wordsworth, generally viewed to be one of the most original writers in the English language and often credited with the success and dominance of the Romantic conception of authorship, is difficult for some critics to understand (Stillinger 96). In fact, they are not alone: Wordsworth himself seemed to have difficulty reconciling his own coauthorship as the book was first published anonymously in 1798 with more than ten references to a *singular* author in the books advertisement. In the three subsequent editions, the byline remained singular and, when it finally mentioned, "the assistance of a friend," it did so without mentioning Coleridge's name. Coleridge's name was not connected to *Lyrical Ballads*'s first poem, his own *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, until almost two decades later when it was published in a separate collection (Stillinger 70).

While Coleridge wrote *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the story was developed by Wordsworth and Coleridge collaboratively with Wordsworth providing a rough version of a themes and some major plot elements. In a similar way, Coleridge claimed credit for half the preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (Stillinger 71). Additional collaborators on the book included Thomas De Quincy and Humphrey Davy, a friend of Coleridge, who each significant contributions to the work in the role of editors while Wordsworth's willing amanuenses probably played no insignificant role in the shaping of the text either (71). This of course, does not begin to discuss the literary influences on Coleridge and Wordsworth, particularly Milton, or the role these influences played in shaping, inspiring, or directing the text. One additional, and additionally interesting, source of inspiration for Wordsworth was Dorothy Wordsworth's journals. Her Alfoxden Journal of 1709 and the Grasmere Journals of 1800 and 1802 contain passages that many critics believe Wordsworth employed as the basis for all or parts of *Beggars*, *Resolution and Independence*, *I wandered lonely as a cloud*, and a number of other poems and passages (Stillinger 72). All of these pieces were taken without acknowledgment.

Coleridge, for his part, was famous, perhaps infamous for his borrowings from other authors. Convincing arguments have been made that Coleridge's *Frost and Midnight* attempts to mimic, either for reproductive, synthetic, or critical purposes, a poem from William Cowper's *The Task* (Stillinger 101-103). More interestingly, and problematically for Coleridge's scholars and defenders, are Coleridge's unacknowledged borrowings, often in the form word-for-word translations or direct paraphrases, of large sections of writings by German philosophers, most notably Schelling, in Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*. Surveys of the *Biographia* and antecedent literature have shown that up to twenty-five percent of the text is lifted, to one degree or another, without attribution from German sources; the figure reaches as high as thirty to forty percent in several chapters (Stillinger 104).

While Coleridge was attacked for his plagiarisms by his friends and during his lifetime, his supporters, like G. N. G. Orsinis, have defended Coleridge with the justification that, "a genius can be creative even when he is borrowing" (Stillinger 105, 107). While I'm in complete agreement, their argument is after all one that much of *this* essay echos and affirms, the defense is uncharacteristic, perhaps even *incompatible*, with the Romantic notions of authorship that both Coleridge and his defenders embrace and espouse.

However awkward, Coleridge's plagiarism seems somehow congruous with his famous, and famously hidden, collaboration with Wordsworth on *Lyrical Ballads*. Historical research has established that the decision to attribute *Lyrical Ballads* to a singular anonymous author, and then to withhold acknowledgment of Coleridge's contributions for three subsequent editions, was a decision that both of the books authors were in agreement on (Stillinger 70). As much as Wordsworth espoused his ideal of a Romantic genius, perched alone in the wilderness, drawing all creative inspiration from within, it was not a description of a method of creative production that even he himself employed consistently.

Reconciling the conflict between the Romantics professed ideologies and their actions can be difficult. By speaking in Parliament for the creation of authors' natural rights, Wordsworth was attempting to manipulate the connection between Romantic authorship and legal mechanisms of textual control and ownership; Romantic authorship was, from its birth, intertwined with the politics of copyright. But there remains a deep irony in that the processes that allowed Wordsworth and Coleridge to demonstrate their greatest achievements as creative or artistic geniuses, easily the strongest evidence for their claims, were collaborative. By dropping Coleridge from the byline of *Lyrical Ballads*, by failing to acknowledge Dorothy Wordsworth's contributions, and by omitting reference to Scheller's role in *Biographia Libraria*, Coleridge and Wordsworth make the shortcomings of a system based on their concept of authorship abundantly clear. Modern readers must assume that, raised in a literary culture of assimilation, borrowing and critique, they embrace it as a necessary and acceptable hypocrisy if they are to achieve their goals of control and their ability to, "live by their pen".

These problems of attribution, and of the lack thereof, are representative of the first century of copyright and the first awkward legal steps into the discourse of Romantic authorship. They provides a window to the types of contradictions and clashes between persistent collaboration, Romantic authorship, and systems of ownership. Over time, the popularization of Wordsworth's ideal authorship has strengthened and reinfornced copyright to the detriment of collaboration. Contemporary authors must concieve of themselves in Wordsworth's terms but can not collaborate in the same unapologetic fashion. As the publishing industry has been reshaped by these powerful and lucrative systems of control reinforced by the discourse of Romantic authorship, the contradictions that Wordsworth and his contemporaries happily ignored have shaped the dominant systems of literary production.

Contemporary Collaboration and Control

Wordsworth could not have conceived of the effect that his conception of Romantic authorship would exert. Over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, copyright jurisprudence became intertwined with the Romantic conception of authorship. In his essay on *The Author Effect: Contemporary Copyright and Collective Creativity*, Peter Jaszi details some of the ways that this has played out in turning points in American copyright jurisprudence including *Burrow-Giles Lithographic Co v. Sarony*, *Feist Publications, Inc. v. Rural Telephone Service*, *Rogers v. Koons* and *Basic Books v. Kinkos's Graphics Corp.* He argues that in each case, the court's opinion was, often inaccurately or inappropriately, influenced by a firm adherence to the concept of Romantic authorship.

With the dominance of Romantic authorship and the continued expansion of the scope and term of copyright over the past century, the literary environment is increasingly unaccommodating and even hostile to collaborative models of literary creation. Instead it has created an environment that has fostered genres and a publishing industry based on Romantic authorship and strong control to the detriment of preexisting and new collaborative models. While explicit collaboration still occurs, even widely, it is usually in an awkward, hidden, or relatively ineffective or disempowering form.

One such example can be seen Eliot and Pound's collaboration on *The Wasteland*. Their relationship is particularly revealing because the nature of the collaboration between the two great poets is clearly documented in the Eliot's extant manuscripts with Pound's scrawled markings and marginalia. It is also interesting as an example of an extensive collaboration that has tested the limits of the idea of Romantic authorship for many critics.

The details of the editorial changes made to the poem are documented in a facsimile edition of the manuscripts published by Valarie Eliot. They are also summarized concisely by Jack Stillinger in his chapter on *Pound's Waste Land*. In short, Pound reduced the poem from over 1000 lines to its current 434. In the process, he focused and limited the poems message and eliminated a sarcastic tone altogether. Critical feeling, with only the exception of a handful of scholars, is that Pound's edited version is an undeniable improvement. Jack Stillinger concisely sums up the popular critical response:

> The majority view is that the 434 lines of *The Waste Land* were lying hidden from the beginning in the 1000 lines of draft, rather in the manner of one of Michelangelo's slumbering figures were waiting to be rescued from the block of marble. But Michelangelo, in this analogy was both artist and reviser simultaneously. In the case of *The Waste Land*, it took one poetic genius to create those 434 lines in the first place, and another to get rid of the several hundred inferior lines surrounding and obscuring them (127-128).

Eliot, who was mentally infirm and hospitalized during the period of writing and revision of the poem, acquiesced to almost all of Pound's revisions and suggestions (137). Stillinger brings attention not only the extent of Pound's changes but connects the collaboration to an argument that the resulting text constitutes a co-authored work.

There is additional evidence to support this claim. In the first release of the poem, Eliot dedicated the poem to Pound as "il miglior fabbro," an Italian phrase meaning, "the greater craftsman." Through his life, Eliot was also upfront about the importance of Pound's additions to the work describing, quite accurately, the way that Pound had, "turned *The Waste Land* from a jumble of good and bad passages into a poem" (Stillinger 132). However, the manuscripts were not released by Eliot during his lifetime; they were released by Valarie Eliot, T. S. Eliot's widow in 1971.

After their release, the claim of multiple authorship of *The Waste Land*, while supported in the textual evidence, faced fierce opposition from many critics and Eliot supporters. Some critics, a number of whom had published major books on Eliot in the previous years, clung to their image of Eliot as a Romantic genius by making statements that attempted to minimize or trivialize

Pound's contributions (Stillinger 132-134). Their arguments were simply unsupported by the textual evidence. It is impossible to deny that without Pound, *The Waste Land* would be an extremely different, and substantially *less impressive* poem.

While Eliot and Pound played different, unquantifiably important, and equally essential roles in the creation of the poem, Pound's role is, at best, denigrated to the role of "an editor." Rather the describing the *The Waste Land* as a vibrant creative collaboration between two brilliant poets, critics substitute the image of Pound suggesting simple editorial changes to *Eliot's* poem. This unfortunate configuration is forged in the conceptions of authorship defined and sustained by an discourse of *ownership*: *The Waste Land is Eliot's poem*. While I am not confident that I understand exactly what Stillinger desires in his calls for "multiple authorship", I'm not sure that I agree that another name on the byline of *The Waste Land* is a useful goal. That said, his critique is sound: there is a deficiency in a system of authorship and ownership that can not acknowledge Pound for the important role in played in the creation of *The Waste Land*.

In this way, the role of the editor is important to any understanding of twentieth century collaboration. Max Perkins, the editor for Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Thomas Wolfe, is one such example. Often, as is the case between Eliot and Pound, the term "editor" is applied after the fact with the goal of downplaying the role of the less-involved collaborator. However, the roles of "author" and "editor" also serve act as terms that, when applied in the context of a new literary relationship, place firm limitations on the nature of the collaboration allowed to transpire. Crossing these limits can be disastrous for an author's reputation by depriving them of the sole authorship of their work. Through an unusual attempt to claim responsibility for a text, this increasingly common conflict was recently highlighted in the relationship between popular 1980's short story author Raymond Carver and his friend and editor Gordon Lish.

Carver, considered by many to be America's most important short story writer when he died of lung cancer fourteen years ago, pioneered and popularized a dark minimalistic literary style that exploded in popularity during the 1980s. In an 1998 article in the New Yorker, D.T. Max examined many of Carver and Lish's original manuscripts and met with Lish himself in an attempt to investigate Lish's increasingly loud claims claims that, "he had changed some of the stories so much that they were more his than Carver's" (35). He goes into some detail on the changes marked in the manuscripts which include Carver's 1981 collection, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love,* in which Lish, "cut about half the original words and rewrote 10 of the 13 endings." Editorial work of this extent was typical on many of Carver's stories, some of which Lish cut by over seventy percent before they were published (37).

Lish's claims of responsibility for elements of Carver's stories prompted similar claims from others in Carver's life. Carver's wife, poet Tess Gallagher, has made claims on elements of Carvers work arguing that several of his plots were originally hers and comparing Carver's actions to "stealing." After Carver's early death, access to his manuscripts and to his living literary partners has made the collaborative processes behind the creation of his stories unusually transparent to the general public. The scene appears to have been one of rich collaboration between his friends, family, and editors--all of which was hidden during this life.

Many of Lish's edits and additions added touches that were later called, "trademark techniques," of Carver's. Max claimed that, "[Lish's] additions gave the story new dimensions, bringing out moments that I was sure Carver might have loved to see" (38). These edits were so extensive that in a letter to Lish, Carver expressed, "fear [of] being caught" (Max 40). In 1982, Carver pleaded to Lish, "please help me with this book as a good editor, the best ... not as my ghost" (40). Carver was aware that Lish's role was more than what an editor's "should" be but was unwilling or incapable of interacting with him as an explicit collaborator or coauthor; there was simply no classification in the dominant system of literary production for their type of collaboration. The stories are, in most critics opinions, better as a results of Lish's edits; the minimalist style that Carver became famous for can be almost completely attributed to Lish if the available manuscripts are to be trusted as representative.

Few will argue that Lish's changes were insignificant. However, in attempting to claim *ownership* of the work, Lish is forced to demonstrate more than mere collaboration; he needs to demonstrate multiple authorship. The level of collaboration necessary for multiple authorship, and by extension ownership, will, by definition of an editor, exceed that of an editor-author relationship. Lish's predicament highlights the fine line that the contemporary authorial-editorial relationship is built upon. Editing is an acknowledged and widely used method for literary collaboration *because* the product of editing is defined as uncopyrightable and therefore transfer no rights of ownership or authorship to the editor. Both Eliot and Carver demonstrate that authors want to collaborate. They realize that by working with others their work becomes better. But in order to gain ownership, attribution, and remuneration for their work, they must not collaborate too much. To succeed in the contemporary literary world, an author must collaborate as much as possible without losing authorship, and by extension their ability to claim sole attribution and ownership of their text. In the end, writers collaborate less, and the world is left with an inferior production.

Carver and Eliot's secret collaborations, hidden at least during the authors' lifetimes, imply that explicit creative collaboration is rare in our current literary landscape. However, the power of collaborative work is too powerful a model to avoid altogether. Over time, the writing and publishing industry has manipulated both the model of collaboration and the system of copyright to facilitate collaboration in several notable ways. Dominant in this landscape are corporately "authored" texts created under a process known commonly as "work-for-hire and jointly authored works, as represented by the terms, 'with', 'as-told-to', and 'and' in by-lines."

The "work-for-hire" doctrine, a common part of the copyright jurisprudence rooted in British copyright and now internationalized through global treaties, states that authorship (and as a result ownership) for works created within the scope of employment rest with the employer. The implications for the promotion of collaboration are not difficult to trace; if an employer, for example the Disney corporation, hires five brainstormers, ten script writers, five composers, ten musicians, twenty voice actors, fifty animators, and twenty editors to produce a movie, the product of this work, because it was created within the context of contractual employment with Disney, belongs not to the one hundred and twenty artists who created the film but to the corporation. With Hollywood and corporations like Disney as a prime example, this model has been instrumental in facilitating corporate collaboration. However, it does nothing to facilitate the type of borrowing from existing texts that was essential to earlier models of collaboration.[11] The work-for-hire doctrine is not a method for aggregation of ownership or authorship or a method for *collective* creation or control. In fact, it ensures that the creates receive no rights at all to works created under this model.

Peter Jaszi has described the work-for-hire doctrine as, "a logical (if perverse) working out of the underlying assumption that the essence of 'authorship' lies in the original inspired creative genius" (34). He points out that is not the executors of the works, but the inspired genius behind them. This becomes particularly perverse when the the "inspired creative genius", at least from the legal perspective, is a board of directors or a group of stock holders. However, with no other available method of articulating collective ownership and authorship, this type of corporate authorship is the only functional solution. The dismal situation for ownership and authorship is, in practical purposes, one of all or nothing: working alone, with all it's pitfalls and drawbacks, is all; work-for-hire is nothing.

This is not to imply that collective authorship with implications of collective control is impossible. In actuality, joint authorship is steadily increasing in popularity and influence. However, joint authorship operates in an environment hostile to collaborative work, and, as a result, is difficult at best. Empirical studies have shown that instances of joint authorship--a measurement taken by tallying books and articles with more than one person on the byline--are becoming increasingly popular and prominent (Barbato 1986). While these collaborations are important in highlighting

11. This type of borrowing was important to the early framers of copyright as well. Copyright, with its expiring terms, originally set to only fourteen or twenty-eight years, was designed as a balance between the desire for author's rights to their work and the need for a rich collaboration based on unhindered borrowings--in a word, a rich information commons or, in contemporary legal terms, a public domain. In the last century of American copyright, terms have been repeatedly extended, both retroactively and proactively. The result is that the public domain has been frozen. This is in large part due to a strong corporate lobby that does not want to lose control of lucrative copyrights that include Mickey Mouse and the *Wizard of Oz*.

the persistent power of collaborative processes, they are hindered by the hostile climate of control and authorship created by copyright.

In an article written for science-fiction authors on *How to Collaborate without Getting Your Head Shaved*, Keith Laumer, an author and collaborator, ends his short piece with the advice, “If you possible can, write it yourself. Collaborations, like marriages, should only be undertaken if any alternative is unthinkable” (217). Mark L. Levine wrote an article for *Writers’ Digest* titled *Double Trouble* where he urges potential collaborators to first sign a complex contract that clearly delineates both the roles that the collaborators will play in the creation of the book and the division of payment (34-35). In an article for *Writer*, Leonard Felder points out that not only should potential collaborators first agree to a division of royalties and payments, but that they must have, “a written agreement on...the way your names will be listed on the book’s cover” (22). Unfortunately, this advice is all perfectly sensible in today literary climate. While many of these articles also mention the potential benefits of joint-authorship, they explicitly, and accurately, approach the collaboration as a business relationship; their emphasis on avoiding the pitfalls of such joint work.

In reality, no literary collaboration can be divided cleanly into portions or disected on a contract sheet. As evidenced by Eliot and Carver, neither can roles such as “editor”, “author” and “coauthor” describe the spectrum of meaningful literary collaboration. However, under current systems of literary production defined by copyright and Romantic conceptions of authorship, writers have few other options. By emphasizing ownership and control as the primary, and in most cases the *only* method of compensation for literary work, meaningful collaboration becomes difficult in all cases and impossible in most. Rather than borrow and work together, authors will usually have an easier time working alone. Rather than borrow an idea, passage or theme from another novel and risk a copyright suit based on the existence of “substantial similarities,” authors are more likely to not include the theme or passage in the first place. The fact that joint-authorship and collaboration can function, and even experience massive growths in popularity, in this hostile environment, is testament to the power and of collaboration. Without a strong system of control shaping the landscape of literary creation, there is no guessing what other works we might enjoy.

Conclusion

Perhaps with a history as broad and thin as this, meaningful conclusions on the nature of collaboration and the nature of copyright can not be drawn; but this was never my goal. There is no denying that collaboration is persistent, but a handful of citations might have demonstrated this point as effectively as this essay. There is no denying that collaboration is effective, but this also would have been well served will less effort and ink. The real conclusion, one that has been echoed throughout this piece, sits at the interstice of collaborative literary creation and copyright grounded in Romantic authorship: *when we give control of literature to individuals, collaboration is less common, less meaningful, and less effective.*

Given the evidence in this essay, restating this conclusion seems almost unnecessary. Yet, it remains absolutely essential; in the dominant modes of literary criticism and production, it is almost wholly ignored. History has shown that the importance and power of collaborative creation is one of the most powerful mechanisms for the creation, organization and dissemination of knowledge. The dominance of the Romantic notion of authorship has forced us to ignore both the importance and power of collaborative creation and the effect that this type of ownership has on collaborative models. We needn't ignore the power that ownership and control brings to the table but we should not so easily dismiss collaborative work because it's incompatible with the ideology that lets us control, and amass fortunes, from our ideas and from those of others.

It is established that authorship reflect ownership. In today's literary world, one where collaboration is *growing* in its use and influence, ownership--at least as defined by copyright--does not rest with the creator or creators of the work but with the name or names in the byline. There is only room for one--maybe two--individuals in this space and it gets tight fast. In response, we push collaborators into our bibliographies, acknowledgment pages, or out of the book altogether; still, perhaps this is unavoidable; perhaps it is even excusable. It becomes *inexcusable* when we limit the extent of our collaborative enterprises *because* we are unable to represent the nature of our collaborations in a way that will ensure attribution or compensation for the work. As the last thirty years of Foucault and his supporters have shown, attacking and deconstructing authorship is not enough, we need to deconstruct the systems of control that have enshrined and are perpetuating these these conceptions.