RECOUNTING THE AUTHOR

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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May, 2012
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Abstract

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In this dissertation it is argued that all literary authorship is to a greater or lesser degree a product of labor of more than one person and that, as such, all literary authorship is collaborative. For the purpose of examining this collaborative aspect of authorship this dissertation deals exclusively with the examples of unconcealed literary collaboration. Among these, the examples of conjugal collaborations of Michael Dorris and Louise Erdrich, Peter Redgrove and Penelope Shuttle, and Julio Cortázar and Carol Dunlop are used to investigate the usefulness of marriage as a metaphor most frequently employed in the descriptions of overt collaboration. The tentative conclusion reached is that collaboration in terms of literary authorship requires a more suitable terminology, one that would go beyond the romantic or romanticized language of shared intimacy. Another key premise is that the idea of authorship as an exclusive solitary activity leaves a particular mark on the process of literary creation itself, as well as on the very activity of writing. Here novels written by collaborative couples (The Crown of Columbus), but also novels written by smaller (The Caverns) or larger (Invisible Seattle) groups were used to explain how that which is considered to be a ‘proper’ way of writing influences both the character and the reception of a particular text. The name of the author (whether singular or plural), as well as the pseudonym, are described as indicators of relative authorial plurality and shared authorial responsibility, with any name provided as the name of the
author symbolizing the necessity of human involvement with the text as well as the other participants in the literary exchange. The model of a particular dyadic relationship established between the text and any person who interacts with it (in any capacity) is offered to account for the notion of literary authorship as a process rather than an act. In this process numerous individuals through the interaction with each other as well as with the text assume responsibility for that text. In the end, the peculiar circumstances of this dissertation’s authorship itself are examined in the context of the key ideas presented. The main conclusion of this dissertation is that examples of open literary collaboration broaden the understanding of literary authorship as a whole, pointing to the fact that all authorship relies at least to some small degree on sharing the creative labor as well as the responsibility for the product of that labor.
Preface

It can be said that anything worth doing is worth doing twice. It can also be said that anything worth doing is also worth sharing. Neither of these claims is necessarily valid when it comes to doctoral dissertations. If there is any reason to do them twice over, then at least one of the versions was not worth doing. And they are not, under any circumstances, to be shared – this is expressly pointed out in the Graduate Student Handbook (“Students must prepare their own dissertations. Joint dissertations are not permitted” [12]). However, in the case of this particular dissertation, defending it for the second time will, hopefully, be a worthy effort, not for the sake of the degree that might result from it, but for the sake of turning attention, institutional as well as public, to the less than fair treatment of collaboration in academia.

In this context, the specific purpose of this preface is to point out two facts:

Fact 1: In 2005 two persons were accepted (albeit as “a student”) to the Department of English Graduate Program at Case Western Reserve University, two persons attended the classes and fulfilled together all the requirements of the necessary coursework, two persons taught together as TAs (as two instructors in one classroom, and as two writing tutors per one student needing assistance), two persons passed together the final qualifying exam, two persons proposed and defended the prospectus for a thesis, two persons defended that thesis in front of a committee consisting of CWRU faculty members.

Fact 2: This is not a “[j]oint dissertation.” Joint dissertations are not permitted. In 2011, the Academic Integrity Board found that first
dissertation or, more precisely, one of the persons responsible for it to be in violation of the University’s regulations. Only the final stage of the above-mentioned relationship appeared to be problematic. The problem was that there had been no previous precedent, no model according to which the academic status and relationship of those two persons could be recognized. The only stipulation (at least in the Graduate Student Handbook) even remotely considering the possibility of two persons taking part together in a PhD program had been the one previously cited: “Joint dissertations are not permitted.” It could be argued that the earlier dissertation, the one that had been found inadequate, was also not a “joint dissertation,” but it had been defended before a committee by more than one person. However, when it comes to this dissertation it is worth repeating that it is not a “joint dissertation” simply because there will be only one person taking responsibility for it before the committee.

In a nutshell, this is also the main issue examined in the dissertation: the relationship between a text and the sum of responsibility assumed for it. Fortunately, literary texts, and especially published texts are very different from dissertations. Dissertations are, in a certain sense, almost non-texts, or at least half-texts, texts that do not speak for themselves, feeble texts that need to be defended and approved, lonely texts for which only one person is required to assume responsibility. In other words, the stipulation that “joint dissertations are not permitted” goes against the very nature of the text, at least as it is defined in this particular non-text, in this particular dissertation. To maintain that “joint dissertations are not permitted” could almost be seen as tantamount to a claim such as ‘round wheels are not permitted.’ However, unlike dissertations, university regulations are texts that speak for themselves, strong texts that actively shape and, if necessary, bend reality, texts that express unwavering beliefs, even dogmas, texts
one is not supposed to question, texts with which one is not allowed to enter into a
dialogue. How else can it be explained that the academic community chooses to ignore
the fact that every dissertation is, to a degree, a collaborative effort: on one hand, a PhD
candidate has the critical support of an entire committee – every idea, indeed every
sentence of a developing dissertation is scrutinized (edited, corrected, influenced) by
worthy professionals; and on the other hand, a candidate is supposed to enter into a
dialogue with other scholars, match his or her ideas against theirs, use their work to
promote his or her thesis. All this accounts for a tightly knit relationship that can best be
described as collaborative. Still, as described, this relationship, or web of relationships is
not supposed to result in a “joint dissertation,” the text that is supposed to be a
dissertation is expected to function as a text, while at the same time ignoring the
circumstances of its creation.

Traditional (or even institutional) approaches to authorship may be tolerable in
dissertations that deal with subjects other than the nature of the text and the nature of
authorship, or even dissertations that argue for monolithically singular authorship and
individualized responsibility for literary text. However, this dissertation opens all
authorship to debate. What is more, in it, all authorship is presented as a sort of a debate
in itself, a negotiation of a sort that involves multiple subjects, numerous participants,
members, partners… Needless to say, since a dissertation is seen only as a stage in the
creation of a fully publishable or published text, it is debatable whether the authorship of
a dissertation is an important issue – one might see it as a very private matter, as opposed
to the public character of authorship of a published scholarly work.
Incidentally, and this will be further elaborated in one of the chapters, this dissertation, the key ideas behind it, have been conceived as a private sort of a project in a relationship that both predates and surpasses the entire six (or now even seven) years that it took for that first dissertation to be dismissed (or this one to be evaluated in its stead). Rather than entering an academic community in order to find out which issues to pursue, those two persons referred to in Fact 1, have approached a particular institution (CWRU) with a desire to develop ideas they have already identified and discussed in (then) more than eight years of collaborative literary practice. These ideas are now here presented under nominally singular authorship, a type of authorship that in no way reflects the ideas themselves, nor the circumstances of their development, but rather reflects the institutional view of authorship, proscribed authorship, authorship forced upon a text rather than stemming from it.

Surely, this is not to say that the subject of literary collaboration can or should be approached only collaboratively. However, in this particular case, there would be no dissertation had there not been a collaboration preceding it. Consequently, the goal of this dissertation is to contribute to the debate in which the current rules proscribing authorial singularity will be examined and challenged, debate in which institutional positions towards collaboration will be (re)evaluated and updated. For better or for worse, this debate has already begun, and here at CWRU the institutional contribution to the discussion has consisted of the Academic Integrity Board ruling dictating the conditions of this dissertation’s pending defense, as well as the text of the dissertation itself. However, and regardless of that fact, all who have contributed to the (collaborative) process involving this work should be commended, since they have willingly or
unwillingly, knowingly or unwittingly helped along the wider acknowledgement of collaborative practices at this university and in academia as a whole.
"Introduction: Recounting the Author"

When thinking about literature, trying to imagine it as a type of a system in which numerous subjects find each their respective place and perform diverse functions, it is quite easy to subscribe to the definition of the *art world* provided by Howard Becker:

> All artistic work, like all human activity, involves the joint activity of a number, often a large number, of people. Through their cooperation, the art work we eventually see or hear comes to be and continues to be. The work always shows signs of that cooperation. The forms of cooperation may be ephemeral, but often become more or less routine, producing patterns of collective activity we can call an art world.

(Becker 1)

Indeed, if observed from a particularly high vantage point, the *literary world* could remind us of a heaving sea where the energy of a wave travels through every droplet, or a desert in which every grain of sand builds the dunes, or even a busy metropolis in which people and vehicles create an image of seeming insect-like harmony—the sweeping image in which every part and particle participating makes us disregard them as individual elements. However, if that image of literature as a system, literature as a world, is to retain any relevance, there needs to be a point where the collective and the common meet with the individual and the personal. One meeting point is certainly to be found in the notion of literary authorship; it is there that the collective and the individual involvement in literature shift one into the other. Consequently, it is necessary that the concept of literary authorship be re-examined in order to accommodate this factor – the author needs to be recounted to better explain how the link between the collective and the individual is established and manifested.
Imagined in this way, authorship is considerably different from the way authorship is traditionally (or, maybe, only pejoratively) imagined. The main difference is that, unlike the traditional image in which authorship of each text most often relies on the work of a single exceptional individual, the notion of authorship suggested in this dissertation includes multiple subjects working together, knowingly or not, on the creation of a particular text. Hence, this idea of authorship is close to what has been recognized as collaborative authorship by a number of scholars, including Wayne Koestenbaum, Jack Stillinger, Lorraine York, Holly Laird, Bette London, Susanna Ashton, and Linda Karell, though for them the term ‘collaborative authorship’ most often describes only a category, or a type of authorship—what will from here on be referred to as overt collaboration—and not an aspect of all authorship. In other words, this particular discussion of authorship will not provide a taxonomy of literary collaboration, nor present it as an isolated phenomenon, but will provide, at least in part, an answer to the question posed by Bette London: “Is collaborative authorship… an anomalous occurrence, of interest primarily for its exceptionality, or is it… a common feature of most if not all authorship that passes as singular?” (London 3). Examples of openly or overtly collaborative texts will be observed in order to analyze some of their key characteristics and hopefully suggest models of imagining all authorship as collaboration, along with models of perceiving overt collaboration not as a curious literary aberration, but merely as a way in which the collaborative character of literary authorship manifests itself. This, of course, represents an all-inclusive view of authorship, already outlined by Linda Karell and Rebecca Moore Howard, according to which all categories of subjects in the system of literature—writers, editors, designers, publishers, critics, readers…,
indeed all participants in the system of literature who for better or for worse interact with a particular text—are perceived as collaborators.

**WHAT DOES COLLABORATION MEAN?**

This collaboration is easiest to explain and accept in the broadest possible terms. When Edward Said speaks of “literature [as] produced in time and in society by human beings, who are themselves agents of, as well as somewhat independent actors within, their actual history” (Said 152), he also describes the collaborative character of literature, and consequently the collaborative character of literary authorship. Taken as a whole, literature certainly cannot be seen as a product or a project of a single individual, the genius, as the principal maker of literature—though this fact is often propelled deep into the background due to the tendency of the public to worship the feats of individual literary ‘heroism.’

However, Bette London claims that “the most concrete instances of collaboration… literalize—and hence render visible—practices that inform a range of historical writing arrangements; thus they allow us to see as authorship what often does not pass as such” (London 21). In other words, it is the open or overt literary collaboration that provides us with patterns that, when applied to all instances of authorship, reveal collaboration as the underlying principle of literary creativity. This leads a number of scholars, among them James Leonard and Christine Wharton, to conclude that “[t]he collaborative is evidence of what we might now call the communal quality of writing/discourse/thinking…” (Leonard et al. 36). Thus, collaboration is at the same time the mode of achieving fully functioning texts—since there is much more to
authoring than merely writing, and much more to writing than writing alone—as well as
the principle of connecting all texts and all literary subjects into a system of literature.

For this reason, half a dozen scholars whose work was gathered in *Author-ity and
Textuality: Current Views of Collaborative Writing*, all come up with the same conclusion. Leonard and Wharton find that “any writing is essentially collaborative” (Leonard et al. 36). Linda Hughes and Michael Lund conclude that “if collaborative authorship more dramatically reveals the evidence that language follows as well as precedes human beings who can interact with each other, the same can ultimately be said of all writing, which is always implicitly collaborative” (Leonard et al. 56). Jeanette Harris expresses a “growing realization that in one sense, all writing is collaborative” (Leonard et al. 77). And Shirley Rose shares “a conception of all discourse as socially constructed and thus essentially collaborative” (Leonard et al. 87). All of them detect collaboration both by observing literature as a system, as well as by analyzing how a text functions in its totality, from the inception to the reception.

Therefore, if the field of authorship is populated by numerous subjects, any definition of authorship needs to address the prevailing relationships between those subjects. As Jeffrey Masten puts it “[c]ollaboration is…a dispersal of author/ity, rather than a simple doubling of it; to revise the aphorism, two heads are different than one” (Masten 19). What this means is that the activities that are traditionally associated with authorship are not nearly enough to describe the relationships between the now multiple authors, and it certainly does not suffice to multiply every activity, role, or operation by two (or more) to come up with an approximate account. In fact, rather than trying to enumerate the manners in which multiple subjects connect by way of text, it will suffice
to suggest that they are all engaged in a collaborative relationship. In these terms, collaboration can be described as the prevailing relationship between multiple subjects engaged in the authorship of a particular text. However, this description is by no means an idealized one and collaboration should not be seen as a harmonious method of creating literature effortlessly. Collaboration, to be sure, can also be unequal or non-egalitarian, a source of anxiety and frustration, can occur against the will of (some of) the collaborators, but is never absent, and always results in some sort of a text—and any text, any result of this relationship, is better than no text at all. In other words, the positive term ‘collaboration’ is to account for relationships resulting from any type of interaction with a text. At the same time, only some of these relationships are more or less harmonious, or concentrated, or organized; only some of them are truly (or intentionally) productive.

Here the starting premise is that there is always some degree of collaboration in any type of authorship: collaboration as a principle may be present in a particular text’s authorship in a higher or in a lower degree, but it is always there, always present, and therefore should be taken into account. While it may not be accurate to claim that every text was written by more than one person, it can nevertheless be said that the authorship of every text was and is in at least some small measure shared between the person nominally recognized as the author, or the (primary) writer, and other individuals, more or less identifiable, more or less helpful, more or less active…Therefore, in the context of this dissertation occasional examples of nominally singular authorship are used to register that minimum of collaboration that is to be found in all literary authorship, and not to revise the conditions in which those texts were made by mentioning them in the context
of collaboration. More importantly, defining collaboration as (one of) the underlying principles of literary authorship does not erase the role of the individual’s effort in the system of literature. After all, no person’s labor is expendable, no person’s labor should be diminished to accommodate additional participants in accounts of particular examples of authorship. Quite the contrary, each individual’s achievement is great exactly because s/he manages to work well with and in spite of others, which also means that each individual participating in the system of literature is automatically, by virtue of his or her participation, involved in numerous literary relationships with other individuals. Again, everybody who participates in this collaborative relationship is an author (as opposed to the author), regardless of his/her role or investment. As Donald E. Pease states, “[i]n order to be enabling, the term ‘author’ can no longer remain divided into partial subjects (the auctor, the author, the reader, the critic, the determining-determined subject)” (Authorship 276). In the context of the argument presented in the chapters that follow, this means that every role in which one comes into contact with a text, every type or amount of creative investment makes that person an author.

UNDERSTANDING AUTHORSHIP AS A PROCESS AND NOT AN ACT

One of the key requirements for considering authorship in these broad terms is to recognize it as a process, meaning a series of acts, rather than a single confined act. In Attributing Authorship, Harold Love defines authorship “not as a single essence or non-essence, but as a repertoire of practices, techniques and functions – forms of work – whose nature has varied considerably across the centuries and which may well in any given case have been performed by separate individuals” (Love 33). In the context of
collaborative authorship this also means that these “practices” are performed, these “techniques” are employed by numerous individuals at different moments (constituting more or less distinct acts) that are anchored by (in) a text itself, meaning there are not only numerous ways in which individuals can author, but also numerous opportunities to participate in the authorship of a particular text—consequently, authorship is not achieved in any (one) particular instance, but is developed in a succession of instances. This perspective on authorship also coincides with Lynette Felber’s perspective on literary collaboration: “Collaboration is not a discrete activity but a process, a continuum of activities” (Felber 188). This, seemingly, appears to be in contrast with the nominally singular authorship as it is traditionally perceived, but only if one would rely on the practice of naming the author as placing a seal on the authorial process, encapsulating it in an act of (relative) individual greatness. However, if all authorship is a series of acts, that is certainly an indication that multiple individuals may indeed interact with a text in an authorial capacity.

Here, the main distinction between an act and a process lies in their respective duration: an act has as a determinable, fixed duration, a more or less identifiable beginning and end, an implied finiteness, whereas the duration of a process does not necessarily need be determinable. Therefore, the term ‘act’ could refer to “[a] thing done [emphasis added], a deed,” while the ‘process’ may be seen as “[t]he fact of going on or being carried on, as an action, or a series of actions or events; progress, course” (OED). In terms of literary creativity this would mean that the authorship of a particular text, if imagined to depend on only a single individual, is always completed, finished; by the time it reaches an audience it is already an established fact, a deed, and as such closed to
further participation of other subjects. On the other hand, if authorship is perceived as a form of creative collaboration, it is perpetuated by every involvement with the text. To be sure, all authorship is fully recognizable only in retrospection, when a certain stage (composition, editing, publication, critical reception etc.) of authorship is performed. It would seem that once the author is named (regardless of whether s/he is the (primary) writer of the text or not), once the title of the author is awarded to a particular (group of) person(s), the text is complete, but this completeness is very relative, if not illusory, since publication only prepares a text for the next stage of authorship in which the (critical) public is allowed to participate. Indeed, the process of authorship relating to a particular text is, at least in theory, endless, since a person participates in it every time he or she reaches for the text, in any form it may be available, and in any the role potential participants may assume. Surely, at any particular point in time there may be a finite number of collaborators contributing to a work of literature, usually in the capacity of writers, yet the process of authorship can be seen as not contained in a particular point in time, but expanding with the flow of time. This view is quite close to Jerome McGann’s notion of “social text” (The Textual Condition 21) that emphasizes connections and relationships between people and texts, texts and texts, as well as people and people in the literary domain—and explains them not in terms of distinct separate occurrences, but in terms of continuation and codependence. Furthermore, this also accounts for all the material aspects of literary production highlighted by, among others, Donald McKenzie and Roger Chartier, since all literary activities can be grouped under this, somewhat enhanced, concept of (shared) authorship – in each of them there can be found at least a
trace of responsibility for the continuation of the greater literary dialogue, and consequently a trace of (tendency towards) collaboration.

**WHAT IS AN AUTHOR?**

In defining the author the position expressed by Toril Moi may be useful since in it she conflates a number of important aspects of authorship to provide a complex description, and a possible basis of the definition of authorship as collaboration:

> At the center of humanist criticism… is the seamlessly unified self—either individual or collective – which is commonly called ‘Man’… In this humanist ideology the self is the sole author of history and of the literary text: the humanist creator is potent, phallic and male – God in relation to his world, the author in relation to his text. History or the text become nothing but the ‘expression’ of this unique individual…

(Moi 8)

What Moi describes here is the author as traditionally imagined: “the seamlessly unified self,” solitary, godlike, “unique individual,” in control of the text. Or, in short, the complete opposite of what an author as a collaborator is—the main difference being that a collaborative author cannot be seen as a solitary figure, in singular, but should be observed (and defined) in plural, as authors, *them*, or even more precisely, *us*. It is with Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault that this traditional concept of author(ship) gets challenged. Nevertheless, neither the ‘death of the author’ nor the irrelevancy of who is speaking (or ‘author-function’) leave enough room for the human subject in the practice of authorship. However, pluralizing (or recounting) the author achieves a number of effects: there is no longer any “seamlessly unified self”—the seams of authorship are showing, they are even exaggerated, there is no self, but *selves* who are *others* to each
other, and as such fragmented, multiple, volatile. Consequently, rather than godlike, these authors are wholly human, unique not in the sense of being one above the other, but unique because they are alike, comparable, unique because they are essentially the same, not interchangeable or expendable, but same in the sense that whatever they create they share, or create by sharing. As such they do not control either the text or each other, but they interact with the text in the manner that can be reduced to two key activities: reading and writing.

To be sure, the type of relationship existing among all those activities, as well as among reading and writing, is not that negated by V. N. Voloshinov:

A very commonly held opinion has it that the listener is to be regarded as equal to the author, excepting the latter’s technical performance, and that the position of a competent listener is supposed to be a simple reproduction of author’s position. In actual fact this is not so. Indeed, the opposite may sooner be said to be true. The listener never equals the author. The listener has his own independent place in the event of artistic creation; he must occupy a special, and what is more, a two-sided position in it—with respect to the author and with respect to the hero [or the text]…

(Voloshinov 112)

In other words, the definition of authorship as collaboration includes all those whose writing and reading is connected to a particular text. Each of those authors indeed has his or her “own independent place” and though, understandably, they do not invest the same type or amount of labor, they nevertheless all contribute to the same text—either the versions that appear in different editions, or to their reception and relevance. As Hans Robert Jauss puts it: “[l]iterature and art only obtain a history that has the character of a process when the succession of works is mediated not only through the producing subject
but also through the consuming subject—through the interaction of author and public” (Jauss 15). Here, of course, it is important to emphasize that not all of those considered to be the (potential) authors are actually recorded as such; only a small number of them are officially named and recognized as authors. What is more, all literary authorship is negotiated in retrospect—the work that has been performed needs to be observed and acknowledged regardless of whether the focus is on the contributions of writers, editors, instigators, publishers, critics, helpers, friends, family, or readers.

In Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary* ‘author’ is defined as “he to whom anything owes its original… he that effects or produces any thing… the first writer of any thing; distinct from the *translator* or *compiler*… [and] a writer in general” (qtd. in Italia 115). Hence, the term was connected both to the activities of origination or invention, as well as to literary production or writing. However, not all writers seem to be authors, at least not according to Johnson and, arguably, not all authors need to be writers. Only “the first writer of any thing” could be considered an author, while the other writers, other contributors, other collaborators (translators and compilers included) are denied that title. More importantly, this definition seems to put writing at the very beginning of any process of authorship. Of course, this is only if invention is seen as a part of writing and not a literary activity of its own (as in examples of book packagers devising texts and then commissioning writers to actually write them). In John Ash’s *The New and Complete Dictionary of English Language*, terms ‘writer’ and ‘author’ are practically synonymous. To write is “to produce as an author… [t]o perform the act of writing, to play the author, to tell in books,” a writer is “[o]ne that writes; an author,” and an author is “[t]he first mover of any thing, the inventor… the first writer of any thing, a writer.”
Here the claim of authorial singularity stands only if the emphasis is indeed on being “the first mover of any thing, the inventor,” which suggests that the invention has precedence over the actual writing, as well as that it is more important that one writes first rather than what, how, or how much one writes.

Yet even if observed as an instance of invention, authorship would be far from straightforward, especially if Karen Burke LeFevre’s notion of invention is considered, the notion expressed in her pioneering work, *Invention as a Social Act* (1987), which paved the path for considering collaboration as the main condition of creativity:

… 1. The inventing ‘self’ is socially influenced, even socially constituted… 2. One invents with language or with other symbol systems, which are socially created… 3. Invention builds on a foundation of knowledge accumulated from previous generations… 4. Invention may be enabled by an internal dialogue with an imagined other or a construct of audience… 5. Writers often invent by involving other people… 6. Invention is powerfully influenced by social collectives… 7. The reception, evaluation, and use of what is invented depend… on social context.

(Burke LeFevre 33-35)

In other words, even if the activity of writing is set aside, invention is “social,” shared, or to a degree collaborative—a fact that was well articulated in literary partnerships such as that of Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford, or Michael Dorris and Louise Erdrich, but that might not be immediately apparent in examples of (nominally) singular authorship. If examined closely, all aspects of invention listed by LeFevre can only be disregarded if what happens inside a person’s mind is perceived as belonging to that person alone, yet even if that would be the case, it would mean that the readers (without whose recognition the invention does not exist as such) appropriate with their attention, as much as writers
appropriate with invention. And here is exactly one of the crucial aspects of authorship as collaboration: authorship may at times be about ownership and appropriation, but is just as often (if not more) about sharing.

Considering to what extent modern economy relies on so-called intellectual property, imagining authorship as collaboration might seem outrageous, to say the least. After all, the concept of the singular creator of texts developed hand-in-hand with the laws governing copyright.\(^1\) However, in *The Trouble With Ownership: Literary Property and Authorial Liability in England, 1660-1730*, Jody Greene asserts that the author developed under a significant legal pressure: incendiary works of the seventeenth and eighteenth century needed to have authors so that these authors could be punished. And if no author could be produced, a printer was just as liable to pay with his head, as was the case of John Twyn who was “hanged, drawn, and quartered” in 1664 for printing a treasonous pamphlet, and refusing to identify the ‘true’ author (Greene 75). What is more, in order to administer such a severe penalty, the court found Twyn to be the author of the said pamphlet, based not on the fact that he wrote the manuscript, but that he corrected the proofs of the printed text (Greene 75). In other words, before there was the carrot in the form of the Statute of Anne from 1709,\(^2\) there was the brutal stick wielded by Charles II, who attempted with repression:

\[\ldots\] to stabilize the dynamic and fluid field of print by defining the author as a fundamental object of punishment and agent of transgression, restricting public access to matters of state by fixing responsibility for the dispersed power of the printed word in the author. In making the author the prime mover of book production, shifting responsibility for

\(^1\) From Daniel Defoe to William Wordsworth, to name the more notable two, who both promoted proprietary rights of authors, connecting them to the powers of invention, or genius.

\(^2\) Came into force in 1710.
the economy of printed matter from the publisher and printer to the
author, Charles brutally manifested his own royal power and created a
‘privileged’ author as a locus of legal correction and discipline.

(Weber, Harold 134)

In this system it was important that the responsibility be individualized so that drastic
punishments would deter the majority of participants in the literary production from
challenging the power, the authority, of the crown, and the government. But at the same
time the awards were also individualized—by granting the protection of special property
rights to a relatively small number of literary laborers, the law sought to promote
invention, while at the same time keeping the costs of production at a reasonable level.3
Consequently, at least as far as the law or, for example, the U. S. Supreme Court is
concerned, literary (and any one type of) author is defined as “he to whom anything owes
its origin; originator; maker” (qtd. in Woodmansee & Jaszi 37). For some critics of
copyright, most notably for Mark Rose, this is far from a satisfactory definition, since, in
Rose’s words, “authors do not really create in any literal sense, but rather produce texts
through complex processes of adaptation and transformation” (Rose 8). To phrase it in
different terms, authors are privileged users of language, yet their privilege is of relative
worth only if the language is used universally, since they do not create language
themselves alone but along with every user of language.

However, the proprietary aspect of authorship is far too complex to be casually
fitted into this dissertation. The sheer bulk of research in the field of literary copyright—
works by Jody Greene, Martha Woodmansee, Mark Rose, or David Scott Kastan, to

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3 The latter might not be immediately obvious, but if, for example, all participants in the process of
invention and creation of literature (writers, editors, printers etc.) would enjoy the same protection of the
law, publishing would never be the same mass industry that it is today.
name but a few—is such that it would inevitably shift the focus of this work in the
direction of literary ownership. Another legitimate venue for approaching the issue of
authorship as collaboration was fairly recently opened by theorists and historians of
copyright and intellectual property. Along those already mentioned, scholars such as
Adam B. Jaffe and Josh Lerner, Siva Vaidhyanathan, and Lawrence Lessig have all
identified faults in the present copyright system, finding that it hinders creativity instead
of promoting it. To the extent that the concept of private property or private ownership is
one of the main factors responsible for the forced individualization of authorship, the
emphasis in this dissertation on the copyright scholarship could be far greater, still there
are some crucial aspects of the entire copyright issue preventing this. The problem with
copyright itself in the context of authorship is that it insists on clearly identifying those
who directly profit from a particular text, which consequently limits authorship to just
one person or, in the best case scenario, to the least possible number of persons, whereas
the expanded definition of authorship includes all who interact with a text. Hence, the
copyright law prefers to have a singular, or at least the primary author of a text assume
the bulk of responsibility for it and receive the bulk of profit. This primary author is
usually the writer, or at least the primary writer of a text—a role that is common in (even
overtly) collaborative ventures, a role that implies a significant degree of collaboration
(along with every primary writer there is at least one secondary writer), but also a role
that implies a strong hierarchical structure within a particular literary relationship.

The trace of this authorial hierarchy can be detected in the fact that the singularity
of the author’s name has become a norm, even, in examples where the actual writing of a
text is equally shared. When there is no primary author (or writer), one needs to be
invented, as if to comply with Immanuel Kant’s definition of the author as the “[o]ne who speaks to the public in his own name” (Kant 71) and a text, or “[a] writing” as “a discourse to the public; that is, the author speaks publicly through the publisher. But the publisher speaks (through his foreman, operarius, the printer) not in his own name (for he would then pass himself off as the author), but in the name of the author” (Kant 71-72).
In other words, the main emphasis here is again not on the very practice of writing (or in Kant’s terms “speaking”), but on the name in which the writing is performed (usually a singular name), suggesting that all activities under the aegis of authorship can be (privately) performed by multiple subjects as long as one of them (publicly) assumes the nominal responsibility.

**WHY (OR WHY NOT) WRITER & WRITING?**

Here, finally, is a rough, working definition of authorship as a two-sided or mirrored process of shaping language structures (texts) in a private practice (writing) to have it achieve a public form (text), using language that is adopted from the public space (other texts) again through a private practice (reading)—a definition that strives to account for the social character of literature, apparent intertextuality that marks all literary efforts, as well as the role of the individual and the collective in the creation and the consumption of literature. This definition comes close to the views of Harold Love, for whom authorship does not “denote the condition of being an originator of works, but a set of linked activities (authemes) which are sometime performed by a single person but will often be performed collaboratively or by several persons in succession” (Love 39). Here, Love combines Foucault’s author-function with that major condition of authorship—
collaboration. Authors include writers and readers alike, without either of them participating there is no authorship. Of course, here the types of authemes are reduced to just two: reading and writing, but only because both reading and writing are essential for meaningful interaction with the text—a person (or persons) designing the book jacket, for example, has (have) to at least read the text’s title, if not the entire text, in order to come up with an appropriate design. However, of the two, writing is almost exclusively promoted as the domain of the author, in the majority of cases the (primary) writer is considered the author, which is why a significant part of this dissertation will be dedicated to the analysis of what writing entails in terms of authorship, or exactly how writing accounts for authorship. If considering only the solitary model of authorship, the relationship between writing and authorship appears quite straightforward, the writer becomes (or is) the author, which is why the two terms (writer and author) are often conflated into one, or treated as synonymous, as well as why most literary writers approach their work with an idea of potential authorship in mind, an idea that influences their very writing, along with the distribution of literary labor that goes into a particular text.

For Jerome McGann, the relationship between writing and authorship is quite simple: “[a]s soon as a person begins writing for publication, he or she becomes an author, and this means—by (historical) definition—to have entered the world of all those who belong to the literary institution” (McGann 53). In other words, it is writing and publication that produce an author or, more precisely, authors; hence an author is, more or less, a published writer. Of course, “the world of all those who belong to the literary institution” would be rather small if it would include only writers—written texts do not
exist separate from their material form, they are inextricably connected to the medium of dissemination, which is still predominantly the codex. Thus, in the same way as writing for publication creates the author, so the process of publishing requires collaboration, as suggested by M. Thomas Inge: “As soon as the type-setter began to regularize the fonts and impose systematic grammar and spelling on the contents of manuscripts for the sake of expediency and readability, the books produced were collaborations” (Leonard et al. 4). However, on one hand, publishing is clearly a collaborative endeavor, although it is traditionally not considered to be (a part of) authorship. Yet without publishing there is no authorship. Of all literary activities, authorship is most directly connected to writing. Yet a writer does not necessarily need to be an author. Nor does an author need to be a writer, for that matter. A number of terms intersect here, seemingly defining one another without really being defined in return, which to us implies that at least one of the terms unavoidably needs to be expanded so as to accommodate all others. The most likely candidate for such an expansion is, of course, ‘author’ since all other terms: ‘publishing’ (or ‘publisher’), ‘writing’ and ‘writer’, refer to a more limited scope of activities. On the other hand, rethinking, or better yet, recounting the author, demands a new and wider definition of authorial responsibility toward the text and those with whom authorship is shared.

To be sure, writing is not a solitary activity either, but potentially only more private (or more intimate) than other activities that fall under the domain of authorship. This is consistent with Mina Shaughnessy’s notion of writing as “a social act, a kind of synthesis that is reached through the dialectic discussion” (Shaughnessy 83). More precisely, viewed in this way, writing is a type of conversation that spills over the
limitations of ‘real time,’ and demands that interlocutors imagine each other to a degree necessary for them to be able to communicate at all. As Shaughnessy puts it, “we tend to discover what we as individuals have to say by talking with others. Here, in the give-and-take of discussion, we see our experiences in larger contexts: what seemed idiosyncratic or unimportant before now illuminates a general truth; what seems obvious must now be defended; what seems inexplicable now begins to make sense” (Shaughnessy 82). True, it would not suffice to imagine writing in the terms of pragmatic communication, or communication required in order to accomplish other goals. If there is a goal to literary communication then the only goal that can be determined is that the communication continues: writing leads to reading, reading leads to writing, and as a consequence (or simultaneously), writing leads to more writing, and reading leads to more reading. Thus, writers create “signs which function despite the total absence of the subject because of (beyond) his death” (Derrida qtd. in Evans 133). Here, of course, Derrida is referring to the death of the writing subject, or the (primary) authoring subject, which, exactly because the traditional concept of authorship relies on the solitariness of the author-figure, spells the death of any subject since the “signs,” once the author is taken out of the equation, appear to “function” rather autonomously, needing no direct human involvement. However, under closer scrutiny, the authorial subject appears to be very much alive, constituted of combined writerly, readerly, and even textual subjectshoods. A text, if it is to be perceived as such, must constantly be in contact, or interaction with some type of a subject, whether a reading one or a writing one. And here, ultimately, lies the potential for a far wider definition of author, as a subject (not only a writer) in interaction with the text. In this context it is possible to define an author as any person
investing effort to derive meaning from a particular text. This investment of effort, this interaction, whether writerly or readerly, comes with a certain degree of responsibility that is distributed not necessarily evenly among all authors, but is nevertheless far greater in total than the individual responsibility of any single writer, or any single reader.

**WHAT IS AUTHORIAL (OR LITERARY) RESPONSIBILITY?**

Thus it is the total sum of responsibility for the text that constitutes authorship, which is divided among multiple subjects performing diverse literary roles, or diverse literary activities, responsibilities enumerated by, for example, Wayne Booth in *The Company We Keep* (Booth 126-138)

\footnote{Though Booth divides these responsibilities between the “author” and the “reader,” they can easily, if necessary, be applied to any role on either the writerly or the readerly end of the spectrum of literary activity.}.

Needless to say, this is not how authorship is traditionally perceived—whatever responsibility there is to be assumed for a text it is most often assigned to one person and one person alone. For librarians, such as Seymour Lubetzky, author, or author’s name, is clearly the pivotal information towards which texts are oriented—which stems from the preconception that there are more texts than there are authors. Lubetzky defines the author as “the person or corporate body represented as chiefly responsible for the work, i.e. the one in whose name the work is issued and who is purportedly responsible for it… except when one has erroneously, fictitiously, or dubiously been represented as the author of the work” (Lubetzky qtd. in Svenonius 45).

Again, rather than a question of writing, authorship is more precisely a question of “issue[ing]” work (publication), “represent[ation],” and consequent responsibility. But what does this responsibility imply?
Answering this question will be an important part of one of the following chapters, though at the moment at least some outline of the authorial responsibility is required. Jacques Derrida frames it in the following manner: “To make myself responsible is to concern oneself… with a heard speech; it is to take upon oneself the exchange of sense in order to stand guard over its progression” (Derrida qtd. in Lawlor 76). This definition is quite fitting, applied from both the writerly and readerly end of the authorial spectrum, since Derrida speaks of exactly that responsibility for the continuation of literary communication that was previously mentioned. Derrida additionally describes responsibility as “fulfillment” (qtd. in Lawlor 76), which Leonard Lawlor interprets as “the completion, even the ending, of the sense in presence. But, since the sense is always infinite… my response, which fulfills the question asked to me, does not and cannot ever completely fulfill it. The sense is always necessarily open to an indefinite number of fulfillments, completions, or ends” (Lawlor 77). If understood in these terms, it is easier to imagine literary or authorial responsibility as divided among all those who come in contact with a particular text—the acts of reading, or acts of interpretation, can be recognized as these acts of fulfillment Lawlor refers to, acts that only seemingly complete the function of a text, or the text itself, but in reality open it only to ever new readings and interpretations.

Derrida further defines responsibility as “a certain experience and experiment of the possibility of the impossible: the testing of the aporia from which one may invent the only possible invention, the impossible invention” (Derrida The Other Heading 41). In the context of authorship as collaboration, this suggests the imperative of invention inherent to literary exchange, equally on the side of readers and writers, with the text
serving as the aporia that contains no meaning in itself, but that acquires meaning only in
interaction with either readers or writers. If viewed in this way, the invention that Derrida
speaks of is necessary to produce any meaning, yet is “impossible” because it is not
finite, the meaning is not fixed, the authorship not closed, but open to future participants,
future readings, future interpretations, and future inventions. In other words, the
invention involved in either reading or writing does not solve a problem, or it both solves
it and poses it—if meaning (or text) can be seen as a problem.

For Jean-Paul Sartre, responsibility is inextricably connected with authorship as
“consciousness (of) being the incontestable author of an event or of an object” (Being
and Nothingness 634). At the very first glance this might mean that the responsibility
belongs to those who assume it, but in reality it is a call to be aware of one’s actions.
Sartre frames this responsibility to be mainly the domain of the writer, or better yet, along
with the responsibility all subjects share, the writer is responsible for confronting the
reader with this (universal) responsibility; "the writer has chosen to reveal the world and
particularly to reveal man to other man so that the latter may assume full responsibility
before the object which has been thus laid bare... the function of the writer is to act in
such a way that nobody... can be ignorant of the world and that nobody can say that he is
innocent of what it's all about" (What is Literature? 18). If the discussion is kept within
the boundaries of literature, Sartre’s claim could mean that the function of the writer is to
act in such a way that nobody can be ignorant or innocent of what the text (or literature as
a whole) is all about. This, of course, is also the function of the reader, hence if “[w]riting
is a certain way of wanting freedom” (What is Literature? 59), so is reading, and the
authorship is constituted in the relationship between these two activities, as well as in the
relationships between subjects performing these two activities. This reciprocity is noted by Sartre as well; “the author writes in order to address himself to the freedom of readers and he requires it in order to make his work exist. But he does not stop there; he also requires that they return this confidence which he has given them, that they recognize his creative freedom, and that they in turn solicit it by a symmetrical and inverse appeal” (What is Literature? 45). And exactly because there is reciprocity in the relationship between writers and readers, we find that authorship cannot in its entirety be assigned exclusively to one side, cannot be the sole domain (or responsibility) of writers.

After all, in its widest meaning responsibility is close to Emmanuel Levinas’ notion of the term: “the humanity of man, subjectivity, [as] … responsibility for others” (Humanism of the Other 67). This type of responsibility is what lies at the root of literature as well, or any attempt to communicate for that matter. What is more, Levinas’ description of this responsibility can, just as easily be a description of writing and reading:

Responsibility for the other, in its antecedence to my freedom, its antecedence to the present and to representation, is a passivity more passive than all passivity, an exposure to the other without this exposure being assumed, an exposure without holding back, exposure of exposedness, expression, saying. This exposure is the frankness, sincerity, veracity of saying. Not saying dissimulating itself and protecting itself in the said, just giving out words in the face of the other, but saying uncovering itself, that is, denuding itself of its skin, sensibility on the surface of the skin, at the edge of the nerves, offering itself even in suffering – and thus wholly sign, signifying itself

(Otherwise Than Being 15)
The activities of reading and writing are just that passive type of exposure, a type of exposure that is communicational honesty, a belief that there is or was a person at the other end of the dialogue (or a text). In the context of literary exchange, the participants in the system of literature, connected by texts with which they individually come in contact in different roles and capacities, assume responsibility for each other by assuming responsibility for particular texts, either through acts of writing or acts of reading, and in doing so treat those texts as surrogate subjects, as emissaries rather than emissions of the other, but even more, not as mere representatives of others (or otherness), but as others themselves, otherness itself. Hence, the authorial responsibility implies what Voloshinov defines as addressivity, “a quality of turning to someone” (Voloshinov 99). This responsibility takes form in more or less simple acts of writing and reading that constitute further acts of creativity, and therefore the authorial responsibility can be summed up as the ability or willingness to respond to the text, ability or willingness to perpetuate communication made possible by the text.

**WHY TEXT AND NOT ‘WORK’ OR ‘BOOK’?**

As suggested, the text is the axis of the suggested definition of authorship. The two other possible terms: ‘work’ and ‘book,’ will be largely avoided here since they could potentially lead this discussion in slightly different directions. The term ‘work’ would likely tip the scales of authorship towards the writer, since it is almost always accompanied by the author’s, or more precisely, writer’s name, as in ‘Levinas’ work’ or ‘Derrida’s work.’ To be sure, a reader’s work does get acknowledged, but indirectly, and only once the work of reading is transformed into a work of (new) writing: professional
readers such as critics and literary scholars produce ‘work’ by turning their reading into writing. Moreover, the term ‘work’ gets habitually evoked with the author’s, or more precisely the primary writer’s name, which to an extent also points towards the author’s (or writer’s) proprietary rights that are rather exclusive and limiting. On the other hand, the term ‘book,’ tips the scales in the direction of a material object—arguing that books are produced in collaboration would be quite superfluous since even when its content is produced by an individual, a book is most often a result of plural labor. Surely, the medium influences the content, but in the context of authorship as collaboration to say that readers read books (and not texts, or novels, etc.) and that writers write them (and not, again, texts, or manuscripts etc.) would move the discussion away from considering the interaction with texts, and into the realm of media studies, history of the book, or even hypertext theory, which would inevitably water down the intended focus of this study. More importantly, both ‘work’ and ‘book’ seem to be rather influenced by questions ‘Whose work?’ and “Whose book?’—of the three, ‘text’ appears to be the most neutral one. Considering their respective ‘materiality,’ ‘text’ would come right in the middle between ‘work’ (as the most abstract one) and ‘book’ (as the most material one). Graham Allen’s summation of Barthes’ idea of text is particularly useful here: “A text is the material inscription of a work. It is that which gives a work permanence, repeatability and thus readability” (Allen 61). However, a notion of the text that will be used henceforth is slightly different than Barthes’, since, if multiple subjects engage in an authorial interaction with the text, the “stab[ility]” and “unique[ness]” of meaning become somewhat relative. In other words, the text does not necessarily “secure[ ] the guarantee of the written object, bringing together its safe-guarding functions:…” the
stability and permanence of inscription… and… the legality of the letter” (Barthes qtd. in Allen 62), as much as it guarantees the (continuation of) literary communication by being both the basis of the writer/reader dialogue and future literary production (other, new texts). In other words, the text is not “a weapon against time, oblivion and the trickery of speech” (Barthes qtd. in Allen 62), but a sandbox in which writers and readers, or better yet all authors, can play with “time, oblivion, and the trickery of speech.”

For Paul Ricoeur, to simplify the matter slightly, “text is any discourse fixed by writing” (Ricoeur 145). However, this definition problematic for two reasons. If texts are “fixed by writing,” that would mean the reading has no effect on them, cannot in any way compromise their fixity. Therefore, Ricoeur’s definition should be modified by saying that text is discourse not fixed, but suggested, proposed by writing since the only place where this discourse can be temporarily or partially fixed or completed is the mind of the reader. This notion of the text moves closer to one offered by Mieke Bal, who finds it to be “a finite, structured whole composed of language signs. The finite ensemble of signs does not mean that the text itself is finite, for its meaning, effects, functions, and background are not. It only means that there is a first and a last word to be identified…” (Bal 5). “[A] first and a last word”—not necessarily the same first word, or the same last word—the written text and the read text are not identical, but they considerably overlap creating the idea of the text, one and the same, that actually stands for a plurality of texts, both potential and manifested.

Therefore, the text is not recognized as an exclusive responsibility (and, hence, property) of writers, which is somewhat similar to the concept suggested by Stanley Fish who dismisses “the text as an entity independent of interpretation… and replace[s it] by
the texts that emerge as the consequence of our interpretative activities” (Fish 13). Here Fish ties together two ideas already expressed by Barthes. On one hand, the text is no longer imagined in its singular form, the singular is replaced by the plural, since the effect of text can only be explained if texts are not fixed and unchangeable. As Barthes puts is, “[t]he Text is plural. Which is not simply to say that it has several meanings, but that it accomplishes the very plural of meaning: an irreducible… plural” (*Image, Music, Text* 159). Here the plurality is accounted for in the manner in which a text is approached or interacted with: from multiple points and by multiple subjects. For Barthes, “*the Text is experienced only in an activity of production*” (*Image, Music, Text* 157). According to this, reading (Fish’s “interpretative activities”) is just as much an activity of production as writing is. If it would be any different, readers would be unable to experience a text, in which case it would be very hard to understand why they would want to have anything to do with it. Thus, a text (unlike ‘work’) does not necessarily have to be seen as a piece of property. And if indeed both reading and writing are activities of production, then those who perform such activities should all be considered as (co)authors. Of course, both Barthes and Foucault avoided this pluralization of authorship by dismissing the human subject altogether, and instead producing a text-centric, or language-centric notion of literature.

But for now, it suffices to conclude, that the text, as the center, the axis of authorship as collaboration, is *an open, subject-like language form, inviting literary participation exactly because it is not a perfect, finished product*. In the words of Terry Eagleton: “Because a text contains these gaps and silences, it is always *incomplete*. Far from constituting a rounded, coherent whole, it displays a conflict and contradiction of
meanings; and the significance of the work lies in the difference rather than unity between these meanings” (Eagleton 34). This “conflict and contradiction” are the basis of any creativity, writerly or readerly. And while there may not be any need to emphasize the labor that writers put into it, the involvement of readers must be repeatedly phrased in terms of active labor, because, as Barthes concludes, “[t]he Text is very much a score… it asks of the reader a practical collaboration” (Image, Music, Text 163) and, consequently, real effort.

**RECAPITULATION OF KEY TERMS**

Here, finally, it would be necessary to provide all the tentative definitions, which will surely be questioned and modified in the course of this dissertation. The preliminary definition of authorship could be that it is a relationship between multiple heterogeneous subjects involved in a process of assuming responsibility for a text (1). After considering a number of definitions of author and authorship that correspond to the proposed collaborative character of authorship, the author could be broadly defined as any person investing effort to derive meaning from a particular text (2). Thus, authors are not only writers, but readers as well, or more precisely, any person engaged in a meaningful interaction with a text. The key sign of authorship is to be found in the authorial responsibility, the ability or willingness to respond to the text, ability or willingness to perpetuate communication made possible by the text (3). In this context, the text becomes an open, subject-like language form, inviting literary participation exactly because it is not a perfect, finished product (4). And since, at any given moment, but also historically, there are always multiple subjects interacting with the text, these subjects, these authors
can be seen as involved in what can be best described as collaboration (defined loosely), which is consequently the prevailing relationship between multiple subjects engaged in the authorship of a particular text (5). Therefore, collaboration can be considered as the inherent property of all authorship, and not merely a minority mode of literary creativity.

THE SOLITARY GENIUS AND SINGULAR AUTHORSHIP

Perceived in these terms authorship is radically different from the still wide-spread notion according to which literature depends on the work of remarkable individuals who shun the influence of the crowd, or work directly against it, in order to produce masterpieces of unrivaled originality. The unfortunate consequence of even considering the plurality of authorship is that it is often immediately placed in opposition to this singular (or traditional) model of authorship. However, the main task in describing collaborative authorship is not to create an antithesis to the singular authorship, but to emphasize the collaborativeness that can be detected in all examples of authorship, collaborativeness that is only most apparent, or most prominent in overt collaboration.

As Donald E. Pease notes, the concept of the solitary maker had been developing for some five hundred years: “From the fifteenth century through the first half of the twentieth century, the term ‘author’ enjoyed a more or less constant rise in social prestige” (Authorship 266). If looking for the single most important reason for that “rise in social prestige,” one would have to consider the fact that the singular solitary author-genius is a simple enough answer to the complex question of authorship, since all the processes and relationships of literary (or any other) creativity get internalized, and hidden away from public scrutiny. In these terms, formula of authorship is fairly
straightforward: “individual author + inspiration = original literary masterpiece” (Karell xxi). Indeed, what could be simpler?

Yet this simplification creates a space for misconceiving authorship; if the prevalent description of the process of authorship is so idealized that it cannot be successfully practiced by any actual individual alone, then instead of a theory we have a sort of a myth. According to Linda Karell, “[t]erms such as ‘influence’ and ‘inspiration’ keep the myth of individual authorship and creativity enshrined… [and] work to preempt our recognition of the intricate involvement of often unnamed, unacknowledged participants in the process of literary production” (Karell xxi). Another term, ‘genius,’ could be added to Karell’s list, a term that denotes a highly ambiguous category responsible for transferring authorship into the realm of mystical and mythical.

One of the texts, identified by a number of critics as the single most influential in the creation or articulation of the idea, or the myth, of the individual genius, was Edward Young’s *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759):

> An *Original* may be said to be of a *vegetable* nature; it rises spontaneously from the vital root of Genius; it *grows*, it is not *made*:
> *Imitations* are often a sort of *Manufacture* wrought up by those *Mechanics, Art, and Labour*, out of pre-existent materials not their own.  
> (Young qtd. in Howard 82)

Here Young elevates genius above all human effort—the workings of a genius cannot be replicated, and therefore cannot be controlled. If anything, it is the genius that controls human actions, and not the other way around, which effectively renders all genius superhuman, or possibly even inhuman.
The main problem with genius is that it is an exclusive property or quality, possessed only by some, the minority, and not by all. Even before Young, Jean-Baptiste Du Bos, in France, asserted that “[n]ature… has… pitched upon particular persons to give them an aptitude to perform rightly some things, which she has rendered impossible to other” (qtd. Guyer 118). Interestingly, in Du Bos’ opinion, this is so that talents are exchanged, “in order to render [the men] necessary to one another; the wants of men being the very first link of society” (qtd. in Guyer 118). However, this segment of exchange, or even collaboration, has faded soon enough from attempts to imagine genius. The idea that genius is a rare property was cemented by the end of the eighteenth century. In his study of the development of the notion of genius, Paul Guyer cites the claim of Alexander Gerard: “Mere capacity, in most subjects, implies nothing beyond a little judgment, a tolerable memory, and considerable industry. But true genius is very different, and much less frequent” (Guyer 199). Or as Kant puts it, genius is a “favorite of nature” (Guyer 130).

Consequently, there is no reason why those favored by nature would not produce works that cannot be matched by other mere mortals. After all, as William Wordsworth had put it, genius is responsible for “the introduction of a new element into the intellectual universe: or… the application of powers to objects on which they had not before been exercised, or the employment of them in such a manner as to produce effects hitherto unknown.” (qtd. in Stillinger 96). In short, genius operates wholly outside of any particular domain and is not affected by powers working within that domain, since he is able to introduce “new elements” into that particular universe, in the fashion of a true demiurge. Yet even if that were so, if indeed new elements were introduced into the
“intellectual universe” in such a fashion, they would still have to be combined with all other already existing elements in a way that is best described as collaboration. In terms of literature, Stillinger asserts…

… when these ‘previously existing materials’ are literary, and especially when they are conspicuously present as a contribution to the intellectual, stylistic, dramatic, or narrative complexity of a work that draws on them, it is not unreasonable, at least in theory, to identify them as components of the authorship of the work. In this contrived but quite practical sense, every work is necessarily the product of multiple authorship.

(Stillinger 96)

This is why, in order to truly retain his or her genius, a singular author must maintain the highest degree of creative solitude, which translates into a quest for physical solitude. In words of Marguerite Duras, “the solitude of writing is a solitude without which writing could not be produced” (qtd. in Gunnars 15). This insistence on solitude also means there are no witnesses to the act of writing, and consequently this act itself becomes imagined, fictionalized, mythical. Similarly, as Rob Wittig explains, individual peculiarities of reading and writing become a proscribed norm, “become institutionalized… cease to be perceived as quirks and begin to be considered natural, inevitable, necessary—the essence of literacy” (Wittig 18). Among those “quirks,” the pursuit of seclusion seems to be by far the most widespread, since it is the only visible, or promoted behavior of the genius. Therefore, writers hoping to achieve the coveted result, the work of genius, are encouraged to imitate this behavior, seek solitude, and separate themselves from the society, or the group to which they belong.

Thus, teachers of writing, such as Pat Schneider, are generous with their advice: “Solitude is an absolute necessity—the single most crucial necessity—for the writer”
(Schneider 26). Schneider further quotes bell hooks according to whom, Emily Dickinson’s “solitariness was essential for the cultivation of her creative passion. It was in that solitary space that she found her most intimate connection to the Divine, to that quality of yearning for ecstasy that would lead her to write” (Schneider 27). Yet this sheds a slightly different light on the necessity of solitude, suggesting that it is highly relative since, in the more banal terms, writers seek solitude in order to escape what they see as obstacles to writing, but by escaping those obstacles, they also escape what they desire to connect to by writing; hence they use the solitude to write in order to reconnect with what they want to stay in contact with. In other words, the purpose of solitude is not to prevent communication (and collaboration?) but to make it more efficient. Here the solitude is manifested as a physical distance functioning as a temporary pause from the direct communication with one’s surroundings, while the indirect communication continues thorough the writing process which also involves the imaginary other. Thus, the solitude becomes not a prerequisite for writing, but merely one of the aspects of writing. Regarding Emily Dickinson’s mythical solitude, Betsy Erkkila in The Wicked Sisters shows how “Dickinson’s poetry writing was part of a cooperative enterprise” between her and Susan Gilbert, her sister-in-law: “Sue served over many years as a primary audience for Dickinson’s work. She was the subject of several poems and the inspiration for many more… she also served, perhaps frequently, as a knowledgeable critic of Dickinson’s work” (Erkkila 39). Erkkila also refers to Dickinson’s “‘magic circle’ of women correspondents,” concluding: “These instances of women writing together suggest modes of collective authorship that challenge traditional Romantic individualist notions of author and text” (Erkkila 5).
Needless to say, the type of solitude that would enable one to better collaborate is not what is usually associated with the Romantic figure of the author, personified best by Lord Byron, described in 1824 rather dramatically by Sir Egerton Brydges:

Lord Byron had a stern, direct, severe mind: a sarcastic, disdainful, gloomy temper: he had no light sympathy with heartless cheerfulness: -- upon the surface was sourness, discontent, displeasure, ill-will: --beneath all this weight of cloud and darkness lay buried in the deepest recesses of his heart a fountain of enthusiastic tenderness and vehemently fond passion, which could only be touched in the abstraction of the most profound solitude by the wand of imagination, when his sharp an fiery temper was absolutely secure from the irritation of human intercourse.

(Brydges 64)

This brooding “mind” able to function in “the most profound solitude… secure from the irritation of human intercourse” is a stock image most readily associated with the concept of the singular author, and the term ‘genius’ is a catchword of uncritical adulation of the kind that is very much alive today, as for example, in the case of William Rueckert’s description of William Faulkner (published, nota bene, in 2004)…

… only a genius could have lived Faulkner’s amazing and unique inner imaginative life and created the novels and stories that he did. His genius, in other words, was not in the kind of life he led, as is sometimes the case, but in the fictions he created. If it were not for Faulkner’s genius, no one would have been much interested in his life anyway… Faulkner certainly knew he was a genius; in fact, he was sometimes amazed at his own genius…

(Rueckert xii)

Here Rueckert refers to Faulkner’s rather exaggerated account of himself. Occasionally, as in a letter to Saxe Commins, Faulkner would look back on the size of his own shadow:
“Damn it, I did have genius, Saxe. It just took me 55 years to find it out. I suppose I was too busy working to notice it before” (Blotner 352). Yet what throws an even bigger shadow over Faulkner’s individualistic braggadocio is the fact that sometimes these assessments of his own stature were made at the expense of his circumstances and environment…

… now I realize for the first time what an amazing gift I had: uneducated in every formal sense, without even very literate, let alone literary, companions, yet to have made the things I made. I don’t know where it came from. I don’t know why God or gods or whoever it was, selected me to be the vessel.

(Meriwether & Millgate 348)

This claim sounds particularly empty when the focus is put on one of the Faulkner’s early ‘not very literate companions,’ Phil Stone. In his letter of condolence to Stone’s widow, Hubert Starr, a California attorney and a long-time friend to both Stone and Faulkner, wrote: “William Faulkner is Phil Stone’s contribution to American literature, and don’t let anybody tell you any different” (Snell 1). Stone himself admitted to being Faulkner’s “wet nurse,” but Susan Snell provides a significantly longer list of Stone’s roles: “tutor, librarian, and purveyor of books… first reader, editor, and critic… most visible and zealous champion, acting as agent, publicist, patron—and on occasion bank… archivist and Oxford ‘stringer’… one of his friend’s first biographers… biocritical source… Faulkner’s ‘mentor,’ lifelong friend and witness” (Snell 2-3).

Still, if Stone, for one, was Faulkner’s witness, then Faulkner was well within his rights to relegate him to the ranks of the illiterate bumpkins of Oxford, MS, in order to lay the grounds for the erection of his own genius, since the mere existence of a witness
reveals the origin of invention. Luckily, these witnesses have a considerably shorter lifespan than those great figures whom they have observed and aided. In Romanticism, Christine Battersby points out, “[t]he originality of the art-work was not seen as the reflection of the external world, but of the mind and the personality that brought that work into existence” (Battersby 13), and it is there that no witnesses can venture. For this very reason, literary authorship is most often imagined as some mysterious or mythical process.

Both Christine Hayes and Michelle Levy find that “the Romantic notion of the author as an individual and original genius” is still alive and well today due to “continued focus on a handful of canonical authors and reliance on traditional methods of textual analysis (Hayes qtd. in Levy 9). As if to prove them right, Harold Bloom stepped into the twenty-first century with a list of literary notables collected in *Genius: A Mosaic of One Hundred Exemplary Creative Minds*, wielding a definition of genius not that different from the one fostered by Young, Du Bos, Gerard, Wordsworth (who made the cut, but Byron, alas, did not), Rueckert, and Faulkner. Fortunately for Bloom, one half of his ‘chosen’ wrote in English, and only a dozen are women; this being, presumably, the natural distribution of genius(es), otherwise Mr. Bloom might be accused of literary misogyny, to say the least. The notion of genius is problematic because it provides grounds for establishing a hierarchy, such as that suggested by Bloom. Not all people possess genius—if they would, genius would not be such an extolled quality; if everyone would possess it, it would simply be one of human characteristics. But in truth, the term

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5 Interestingly enough, two ‘collaborations’ actually appear on Bloom’s list, those of “The Yahwist” collective and of Socrates and Plato.

6 For Bloom, Shakespeare, for example, is “the supreme genius” (*Genius* 11), which we can only presume is some higher type of genius, as compared to the regular, or unled ones.
genius is used when an individual is to be separated from and elevated above the rest of humanity. The result of the myth of the superhuman hero can be positive in that it motivates individuals to excel, but it can be negative in that it invites individuals to imitate impossible feats, a kind of feats that even the mythologized historical subjects were not actually able to complete, and in that it discourages those who realize that such extraordinary efforts cannot be matched.

However, there are clues that genius is necessarily always a collaborative project, in which those like Harold Bloom, with “the genius of appreciation” (Genius 3), willingly participate. The trick is to shovel praise on the highest heaps, and not to start a new one since “[t]he study of mediocrity… breeds mediocrity” (Genius ix). Unfortunately, most of those participating in the creation of (a) genius do not have this benefit of hindsight. Thus, for example, Michelle Levy in her study of family authorship—analyzing the roles of Mary Shelley (“compiling the published and unpublished work of her husband”) and Sara Coleridge (“editing and republishing her father’s writing”)—concludes that each of them carried a “double burden[:]… to establish their subjects as solitary geniuses, men who wrote independent of private and literary influence… [but also] to offer what seems a very different story, one in which their subjects appear domesticated” (Levy 144).

According to Harold Bloom, Mary’s efforts were well spent, while Sara was not as successful; and he should know since he is the modern-day Samuel Johnson, continuing the work Johnson had commenced in Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets. For it was by Lives of the Poets that Johnson “contributed decisively to the differentiation of ‘authoring’ from ordinary literary labor by establishing a pantheon of great authors whose ‘works’ differ qualitatively from the sea of mere writing” (Woodmansee & Jaszi 18).
After all, projects such as Johnson’s and Bloom’s indicate that no genius can stand unsupported, and that the very idea of authorship as a singular endeavor is a product of collaborative effort. Canonic writers are being elevated to prominence not exclusively by their own efforts, but by the efforts of generations of readers, critics, and scholars. Thus, as a consequence, envisioning authorship as collaboration brings into question the institution of literary greatness in that, by redistributing literary, authorial responsibility, it redistributes and fragments the attention that a particular work receives, which makes literary greatness of mythical stature much less possible to attain or generate.

**COLLABORATION: BETWEEN PREJUDICE AND INVISIBILITY**

Still, it needs to be emphasized once again that it is not the point of this investigation into the properties of authorship to create new hierarchies or rulebooks: this thesis in no way suggests the inherent (or any other type of) correctness of one type of creativity in respect to the other. In this sense it is impossible to answer Karen Burke LeFevre’s question: “Which is the greater fiction: the solitary individual existing apart from social collective or the abstract collective existing over and above individuals?” (Burke LeFevre 83). As her question suggests, every concept has a potential for developing potentially stifling myths. Collaboration is in that respect no different from singular authorship; if the facts and circumstances of authorship are ignored, or concealed, the myth will take their place.

However, at least in the past three hundred years, odds seem to have been stacked against collaboration, which was treated as some sort of a mongrel mode of authorship. Bette London diagnosed that “literary collaborations suffered from invisibility” (London 9), which suggests that the examples dealt with in this thesis might appear as a series of
sideshow acts, easily overshadowed by any legitimate singular masterpiece. As Wayne Koestenbaum notes, “a collaborative text exhibits (shameful) symptoms of double authorship, despite the [writers’] desire to make the work seem the product of one mind” (Koestenbaum 9). The reason for shame is the prevalent notion that collaboration is a refuge of the creatively feeble. The idea that collaboration produces compromise comes from the conviction that a singular author possesses that pure Platonic idea even before it is materialized in a work of art. If that idea does not get immediately committed to paper (or screen), but is instead further contaminated by co-authors re-shaping it in dialogue, it can result only in an inferior text.

If looking for the source of prejudice towards collaboration one needs only to turn again to Young’s *Conjectures on Original Composition*, “suppose an imitator to be most excellent (and such there are), yet still he but nobly builds on another’s foundation… an imitator shares his crown… an original enjoys an undivided applause” (Bate 241). Apparently, sharing a crown (or “applause”) simply will not do; the only proper attitude towards authorship is to claim it exclusively for oneself, otherwise one can never hope to achieve originality. However, some contemporary theorists, among them, for example Rebecca Moore Howard in *Standing in the Shadow of Giants*, claim that all writers are imitators since they build on the work of their predecessors, which suggests that sharing a crown might be inevitable.

In 1890, Brander Matthews identified a tendency for collaboration involving a larger number of participants as “French,” finding that it “suggest[ed] an intellectual poverty… these combination ventures are mere curiosities of literature. Nothing of real value is likely to be manufactured by a joint-stock company of unlimited authorship”
Paradoxically, it is not unusual that collaboration is discriminated against even by those who practice it. In fact, for Matthews, a prolific collaborator himself, “literary collaboration might be defined… as ‘the union of two [emphasis added] writers for the production of one book’… the only collaboration worthy of serious criticism, the only one really pregnant and vital” (*NYT*, June 22 1890: 19). This points towards two important facts: that there existed (and still exists) a tendency to compose hierarchies of type of authorship, and that, regardless of what type of authorship writers engage in, they are never immune to prejudice. Hence, for Matthews, the collaboration of two writers is the real collaboration; any larger group can only produce inferior work.

But most significantly, Matthews’ comments indicate that collaboration was, at least in the last hundred years or so, regarded as a truly foreign practice, bizarre and even perverse, if the salacious or even derogative meaning of the adjective ‘French’ are considered. One *New York Times* commentator of Paris literary life in 1858, calls collaboration “that mystery of French literary labor,” and reveals that “[i]t is largely practiced at Paris—indeed very many of the best French authors, especially theatrical authors, work only in collaboration” (Malakoff 2). One could conclude that the practices of Victor Hugo, Alexander Dumas, Erkmann and Chatrian, the Goncourt brothers, the Tharaud brothers, Allain and Souvestre (of the Fantomâs fame), were indeed foreign and outlandish to the American public: “The story of Alexandre Dumas is familiar,” a snippet from 1928 offers an amusing anecdote about the collaborative practices of the French novelist, “He once said to his son, ‘Have you read my last novel?’ The (un)filial answer was, ‘No, father; have you?’” (“Topics of the Times: Orators Also Collaborate.” 54.). To
be sure, collaboration is in periodicals regularly described as mysterious ("Recent Novels." *The Times*. 15 Mar. 1897: 15), as something of a perpetual curiosity, a constant fad. In his 1910 “Literary Notes From London” James Milne for *New York Times* enquires: “Is literary work by partnership as frequent with you in America as with us here?” (BR8). However, by late 1960s and early 1970s collaboration in Britain was seen as a foreign import—“The device of the novel written in several chapters by separate hands has spread from America to Britain,” when 17 contributors to *The London Sunday Times* followed the example of the *Naked Came the Stranger* collective to produce *I Knew Daisy Smuten* (Brien 44).

Thus, collaboration got tossed back and forth between languages and nations, like something of an orphan child traveling between unwelcoming relatives. And as Brander Matthews’ case shows, it did not receive full support even from those who practiced it. Hence, for example, it was possible for Peter Coolier, who collaborated with David Horowitz on a biographical work, *The Rockefellers: An American Dynasty*, to proclaim that “the notion of more than one person writing a novel seems a contradiction in terms” (qtd. in Chavkin & Chavkin 83). This suggests that collaboration was indeed (and maybe still is) considered to exhibit, as Koestenbaum had put it, “(shameful) symptoms” (Koestenbaum 9). This would, at least in part, account for the fact that the overt collaboration is, almost as a rule, labeled as a minor literary phenomenon—the earliest studies dealing with it as a type of authorship appeared only in the 1980s, after ‘the author’ had already been relegated to a (mere) function.

Consequently, for all practical purposes, the collaborativeness of authorship is largely invisible. Surely, a history of literature is also a history of collaboration, since
observing any segment of culture from a historical perspective necessarily creates an image of generations of individuals working towards a common goal, and hence implies a degree of collaboration. What is more, even if the last five hundred years (to take Donald Pease’s estimate as a reference) have been marked by the idea of authorship as a solitary endeavor, the role of collaboration in creation of literature can hardly be ignored, even if it is still not fully accounted for. As a number of historians have noted, for example, Ancient Greek texts were “social, not an individual manifestation,” meaning they were socially, or collaboratively created similarly to oral literature, but were memorized and performed by individuals (McFarland, Havelock qtd. in Howard 62). This also meant that, when it came to production of new texts, imitation was the dominant mode, “imitation is essential; fabrication is dangerous; subject matter is common property” (White qtd. in Howard 62). Imitating already well-established models gave authors a chance to “participate in the excellence of [the previous] era,” especially if they considered their own age to be inferior (Howard 63). By the medieval times, the dominance of imitation became further established in Europe, with the Bible as the center of the canon resulting in even greater (self)abnegation of individual contributors to the accumulation and dissemination of knowledge. Engaged in what Rebecca Moore Howard calls “writer-text collaboration” (75), the medieval writer was but a pen of God, treating the texts of his predecessors as sacred.

The advent of print that followed cannot be seen as the sole reason for the dramatic change in the notion of authorship that occurred roughly in the eighteenth century. While the technology was still new, all participants in the process of book production were considered equally important. It took a number of factors, not only the
development of technology, but also advancements in philosophy, system of government, and economy, to bring about the shift away from faithful imitation towards original composition as a condition of authorship. What history of the book and literary theory scholars proved in the last couple of decades is that singular authorship is a construct, built and molded under the pressures of economical, ideological, and social influences. As Howard summarizes it: “The printing press, the assertion of text as abstract property, the notion of authorial creativity, the ideology of individualism, and an expanded readership are all essential components of the emergence of the modern author” (71).

Simultaneously with the realization that authorship is a product of social processes, the question of its collaborative nature has been asked. As already noted, acknowledging the collaborative aspect of the material conditions of literary production asks for no great leap of faith, the crucial task is to search for ‘collaborativeness’ inside the text.

Even as authorship was (mostly nominally) individualized, new collaborative practices were being developed, practices that most effectively thrived, less noticeable, or maybe just less noticed, outside of the literary market that embraced the genius-author. In her treatment of the manuscript culture of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain, Margaret Ezell identifies an important and largely disregarded segment of authorship. This particular culture revolved around texts that were never meant to end up in print, but were copied and distributed in small societal circles, among groups of intimates who, often collaboratively, authored and amended them (15). Although lacking a wider public function, these texts—letters, poems, anthologies—had a distinct social and literary function, as a means of literary communication. Such practice, dubbed by Ezell as “social authorship,” for a considerable while existed alongside the burgeoning print culture (37).
To be sure, every historical period from the seventeenth century on had a similar ‘movement,’ especially since not every literary manuscript is accepted by the market. In the twentieth century, the technologies of mimeograph, photocopying, digital print and finally the Internet and print-on-demand, allowed for a fantastic explosion of the so-called underground, alternative, chapbook, or zine literature. Quantitatively, this environment produces as much, if not even more literature than the market-oriented publishing. However, texts created in such an environment circulate in small and often exclusive communities. Thus it is possible that web sites like, for example, Every Writer’s Resource, provide lists with thousands of (English language) online literary magazines that, along with the texts they feature, receive very little critical or scholarly recognition (http://www.everywritersresource.com /Biglist.html). Needless to say, this is the environment in which collaboration thrives, but the main problem with focusing on overt literary collaboration remains that every example appears almost trivial or even invisible in comparison to even the ‘lesser’ works of nominally singular authors: openly collaborative texts are rarely reviewed, almost never included alongside the ‘singular’ texts in scholarly works that do not focus exclusively on collaboration, and, regardless of how long the list may be, are never found among titles that make it into the representative selections such as the Modern Library 100 Best Novels or The Observer’s The 100 Greatest Novels of All Time⁷, which suggests that overt literary collaboration is practically invisible, but also that collaborativeness of authorship is either ignored or denied.

⁷ In the context of a scholarly argument these lists may be as trivial as the Every Writer’s Resource, but are referred to not as indicators of (the lack of) literary quality, but merely as indicators of collaboration’s visibility.
AUTHOR(S) IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: BETWEEN IMPERSONALITY AND COLLABORATIVENESS

In the discourse of the twentieth-century American literary criticism, it was under the aegis of New Criticism that the highest degree of skepticism towards the authorial presence in a text was introduced, in reaction to then long-prevalent tendency of using authors’ biographies as keys to unlocking their works. But probably an even more interesting figure in the context of this dissertation is T.S. Eliot, who in his essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” although far from directly dealing with collaboration, nevertheless explained the necessity of dialogue and intertextual communication among the authors and aesthetics across different time periods. It is in the light of this position that some of the contemporary critics of collaborative authorship have looked for evidence of the collaborative nature of authorship. For example, Jewel Spears Brooker in her text “Common Ground and Collaboration in T.S. Eliot” discusses Elliot’s “longing for collaboration” (Leonard et al. 71) not, as it is the case with other critics (Koestenbaum, Stillinger), by scrutinizing Pound’s input in The Waste Land, but by analyzing the very use of the word “common” in a number of Eliot’s essays. Brooker claims that Eliot’s doctrines of tradition, classicism, impersonality, wholeness, and orthodoxy are not a proof of elitism, but “a celebration of commonness” (Leonard et al. 62), where “commonness” becomes a synonym for universality. She shows that for Eliot building a common ground through literary “exchange” was based on collaboration between the author and the reader, author and the ideologies of a certain period, and finally between the author and his or her predecessors and contemporaries (Leonard et al. 69-72). None of this implies author’s adherence to the tastes and norms of the previous
times, or attempts to indulge the contemporary public but, quite the contrary, author’s
desire to grasp a broader perspective for the purpose of producing a richer,
depersonalized modernist poem. Yet, as his ideas were developed by the New Critics,
Eliot was understood to be de-emphasizing the expressive function of literature, which,
most notably in Wimsatt and Beardsley’s “The Intentional Fallacy,” evolved into a
negation of authorial intention in the critical interpretation of the work; “[t]he design or
intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the
success of a work of literary art” (Wimsatt 3). At that point, when the “design or
intention” of the author were already ignored, ignoring the author altogether was no
longer such a far cry.

Weakened, but not quite dead yet, the author made a brief return in the works of
Harold Bloom and E. D. Hirsch. While in *Validity in Interpretation* Hirsch called for a
renewed attention for the historical author in the face of interpretational inflation, Bloom
in *The Anxiety of Influence* offered a more complex argument finding authors to be
engaged in a rebellion against tradition, and placing them between their predecessors and
their critics in a type of a battle over potential interpretation of the work. Of course, if
operating with a very narrow, idyllic (even pastoral) definition of collaboration, Bloom’s
staunch individualism based on authorial antagonism and impulse to dominate over one’s
peers and predecessors would appear to be the complete opposite of any productive
sharing. After all, Bloom phrases his argument in terms of the present appropriating the
past (“If the dead poets, as Eliot insisted, constituted their successors’ particular advance
in knowledge, that knowledge is still their successors’ creation, made by the living for the
needs of the living,” *Anxiety* 19), and dominance of some writers over others (*Anxiety*
24, 144), such as Wordsworth’s dominance over Coleridge. Thus, in a way, in order to save some authors who in his opinion were worth saving as subjects, Bloom introduced a sort of literary ‘natural selection’ in which writers were left to fight it out amongst themselves for a limited number of author titles\(^8\), proving the point that the great individual genius can exist only at the expense of others deemed inferior or subordinate to him. However, if literature is observed as a whole, its progress (“advance”) and continuation are actually ensured by the fact that one generation takes the place of the previous one: yes, on an individual level, writers may seem engaged in a conflict, but on a larger scale they are actually sharing the work of perpetuating literature as a form of art, which means that the “knowledge” Bloom refers to is equally shared, and that literature, as well as, to a degree, literary authorship are products of collaboration.

At the same time, Bloom directly confirms Roland Barthes’ diagnosis that “[t]he author is reputed the father and the owner of his work: literary science therefore teaches respect for the manuscript and the author’s declared intentions, while society asserts legality of the relation of author to work [copyright]” (Image, Music, Text 160). After all, Bloom’s “ephebe” exhibits blatant Oedipal tendencies in his attempt to claim full, undivided ownership of literature—a literary newcomer’s assault on venerated predecessors confirms rather than negates the idea of male-dominated world of letters. It is this patriarchal and proprietary author that Barthes sought to abolish, replacing him with the impersonal entity of language. Rather than considering an authorial plurality, Barthes replaced the troubled subject with an abstraction and seemingly did very little service to all the critics who, by the late 1980s, became interested in collaborative

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\(^8\) The victors in this historical literary Battle Royal are to be found in Bloom’s Genius: A Mosaic of One Hundred Exemplary Creative Minds.
authorship. However, the “death of the author” was at that time recognized as the death of the author’s singularity and Barthes’ direct dismissal of the traditional notion of authorship opened the path for considering literary collaboration as a source of new perspectives in the discourse regarding authorship:

Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing… As soon as a fact is *narrated*… finally outside of any function other than that of the very practice of the symbol itself, this disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins.

*(Image, Music, Text 142)*

Here Barthes dethrones the figure of singular subjectivity, clearing the space (literally) for alternative approaches to the concept of authorial identity—what dies, then, is the traditional notion of authorship, and not the need for human (inter)action. In the collaborative approach to writing the issue of relationship between writers and texts is actualized: does one lose one’s identity by engaging with another in the process of writing? Is this double, or multiple one a new entity that imposes itself on the text, or is that new entity relevant only in the process of writing? When Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in the introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus* claim: “The two of us wrote *Anti-Oedipus* together. Since each of us was several, that was already quite a crowd… We have been aided, inspired, multiplied. Each of us is already quite a crowd” (qtd. in Laird 268), they are echoing a conclusion voiced by almost all collaborative authors, namely that while there exist specific (non)authorial identities prior to the composition of a text, the text itself, or the process of writing, creates other, new, multiple identities as well.
As if anticipating an authorial multitude, Barthes concludes his essay on the death of the author by proclaiming the birth of the reader who can be seen as the dead author’s collaborator in the creation of meaning:

Thus is revealed the total existence of writing: a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not as was hitherto said, the author… a text’s unity lies not in its origin but in its destination.

(Image, Music, Text 148)

Here, in a way, “multiple writings… focused… [in] the reader” suggest that reading can be seen as a type of writing (and vice versa) that is not identical to the text, and the resulting “unity” of a text implies not that there is a finite number of readings/writings, but that these are simply oriented around a particular text—therefore each text supports a constellation of (shared) literary labor. Introduced in the context of collaborative authorship, the writer-text-reader relationship gains additional strength with the fact that collaborators are at the same time writers, readers, and critics to one another. However, it is Barthes’ reinforcement of the role of the text that is of the greatest importance here, since a strong, viable notion of authorship cannot be built by assuming that some links in the relationship are weaker, or less important than others.

As for Michel Foucault, who further developed Barthes’ alternative to the traditional concept of authorship by introducing his “author-function,” he himself became a veritable “founder of the discourse” regarding authorship and thus collaborative authorship as well. When he claims that “[author function] does not refer, purely and simply, to an actual individual insofar as it simultaneously gives rise to variety of egos
and to a series of subjective positions that individuals of any class may come to occupy” (Foucault 130-131), Foucault is here inadvertently (because he, same as Barthes, dealt most directly with the singular figure of the author) opening the door for the concept of collaboration. His call to “study not only the expressive value and formal transformations of discourse, but its modes of existence: the modifications and variations, within any culture, of modes of circulation, valorization, attribution, and appropriation” (Foucault 137), resulted in responses especially from the area of history of the book. And one of its fundamental discoveries was that book production is a collective and collaborative endeavor (Greene 6), providing opportunity for investigation of the material conditions of literary creation, but also supporting the ‘search’ for collaboration on a textual level. Foucault asks, “What matter who’s speaking?” concluding that, “[d]iscourses, whatever their status, form, or value, and regardless of our manner handling them, would unfold in a pervasive anonymity” (Foucault 138). For collaborative authorship scholars, anonymity is not the answer. They ask: how many are speaking, and how many do we hear (read)? Many scholars have observed that “…in the humanities… collaboration is often viewed as an inferior form of literary production at best... and an inherently suspicious even unethical process…” (Karell xxxiii). For this reason, scholars investigating collaborative authorship had to move away from Foucault’s diagnosis of anonymity, fighting the stigma of an unappreciated or under-appreciated mode of authorship. In a somewhat similar way feminist critics and theorists have not quite come to terms with the death of the author, since it directly undermined their quest for establishing (or uncovering) the feminine literary authority. The shared conclusion of scholars following these two largely overlapping threads of investigation of authorship
might be that the male-dominated, individualistic authorship has run its course, and has, at the very moment when it became threatened by either femininity or plurality, self-destructed, retreating into the abstractions of language and (author) function.

THE (RELATIVE) REACH OF COLLABORATIVE AUTHORSHIP

At the same time, in the past thirty years a good number of scholarly studies dealing with collaboration appeared, creating framework for shared authorship to be considered not as a mere phenomenon, but a valid alternative to the solitary model of authorship. After all, it was Wayne Koestenbaum who found in his pioneer work *Double Talk: The Erotics of Male Literary Collaboration*, that the “double author is a symptom of the monolithic author’s decline” (Koestenbaum 8). What is more, Jack Stilinger in *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary Genius* suggested that authorship should be seen as more than an act of writing. Acknowledging individual inspiration, but pointing towards the collectivity of literary labor, especially in the editorial stage of the literary production, Stilinger placed an emphasis on the entire process of literary creation. The result of his investigation is that “for many works, when the circumstances of composition are investigated in detail, the identifiable authorship turns out to be a plurality of authors” (Stilinger 22). Furthermore, in *Collaborative Circles: Friendship Dynamics & Creative Work*, analyzing the functioning and the distribution of roles among The Inklings (J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis), The Fugitives (Ransom, Davidson, Tate, Penn Warren, Sidney Hirsch), and members of The Rye Circle (Wells, James, Conrad, Ford, Crane)⁹, sociologist Michael Farrell found a pattern of group work that enables individual

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⁹ Farrell, apart from these literary examples, also considers collaborative circles from the field of art, the French Impressionists, psychology, Freud’s Early Circle, and social activism, the Ultras.
members to develop new, avant-garde ideas—group work that is at least in some degree practiced by almost every writer, especially in his or her formative years.

Nevertheless, some scholars focusing on literary collaboration noticed that it is more prevalent, or at least more apparent, among female writers, which led them to conclude this is predominantly a female phenomenon. Even though in *Rethinking Women’s Collaborative Writing* Loraine York concentrates exclusively on collaborations of women, which could indicate that she herself is involved in the exclusively feminist appropriation of collaboration, she refuses to accept that women are biologically or socially predisposed for collaboration. Instead, she sees early women’s collaborations as a form of resistance to Romanticist construction of the author as a distinctly singular male figure (York 69). On the other hand, in *Women Coauthors* Holly Laird, another feminist author, provides a more organic definition of collaboration as a process that benefits from both “sameness” and “differences” of collaborators’ identities: “Collaboration ultimately assumes a crossing between differences and sameness; it issues in and through what are, by turns, troubled, rhapsodic, torn, pleasurable realizations of difference within sameness, of sameness amid difference” (6), which consequently provides grounds for imagining collaboration as conflict as well as harmony.

While some critics approach collaborative authorship with an obligatory disclaimer about collaborative works being marginal, exceptional, rare, if not even endemic, Susanna Ashton is the first one to assert that “every decade of the twentieth century saw a at least handful of American novels written in some sort of collaborative form. Almost every literary genre has had its collaborative texts, from romances to spy stories” (7). In *Collaborators in Literary America, 1870-1920* Ashton also provides
examples from other national literatures thus establishing collaborative authorship as a constant presence in the literary world. After a thorough research of American collaborative novels between 1870 and 1920, she concludes that “America’s Gilded Age was truly a Collaborative Age” (Ashton 1). However, the claim of all authorship being (to a degree) collaborative is best developed in Writing Together/Writing Apart: Collaboration in Western American Literature. There Linda Karell draws her examples from a pool of regional literature seemingly doing a disservice to the concept of authorship as collaboration by creating an impression that collaborative practices are a containable phenomenon, identifiable only with marginal literary occurrences. Nevertheless, the fact is, as Karell emphasizes, that “all literary writing is inevitably collaborative, both regardless of the circumstances of its authorship… and because of the circumstances of its authorship” (Karell xx)—the type of interaction that can be recognized as collaboration is present in the collective authorship of the language itself, in the concept of intertextuality that links preexisting texts into a wider web of meaning, in the practice of reading, and all the way to the sharing of the process of writing.

Still, one thing that almost all theories of collaborative authorship have in common is the fact that they are just that, theories of collaborative authorship, and not theories of authorship as collaboration. True, each of them offers at least some hint towards continuing the scholarly inquiry in that general direction, but not without a disclaimer of a sort. Thus, for example, Jeanette Harris explains:

Because the tradition of viewing aesthetic writing as an individual rather than a social construct is a lengthy one and because some writers really do prefer to work as much as possible in isolation, there is no danger that individual authorship will disappear, but it is likely that collaborative writing will increasingly be a legitimate alternative.
In other words, simply because authorship has been imagined in a certain way for three, or maybe even five hundred years is a reason enough to continue imagining it in that same tradition, as if emphasizing and analyzing the collaborative aspects of authorship somehow reduces or erases individual involvement.

In supporting her claim that all authorship is unavoidably collaborative, Linda Karell reaches for Mikhail Bakhtin’s dialogic theory of language, arguing that if the very tool of authorship is not a product of solitary creation—“the word in language is half someone else’s” (Bakhtin qtd. in Karell 17)—authorship itself cannot be a solitary endeavor either. Yet even she cannot but confirm, and condone, the dominance of the illusion of singular authorship:

… collaboration does not destroy authorship or even argue for its demise; rather, it emphasizes that the ‘author’ defined, the author’s meaning determined and tellable, is a composite figure whose singularity is always a fiction. Nonetheless, nominal authorship—in the form of recognizable bylines and attribution—is ubiquitous and may be an economical, a psychological, and a practical necessity in some cases.

(Karell xxii)

However, it is exactly because of similar stipulations, and repeated cries for the necessary illusion, that collaboration is not universally accepted as an essential property of authorship. Building a theory that in its very inception contains similar caveats can only result in its limited reach, and further marginalization.

Thus, in the end, although he started by proclaiming that collaboration killed the Author, Wayne Koestenbaum offers a pretty meek conclusion, confirming rather than
overthrowing what can be perceived as an oppressive demand for the singularity of authorship: “…I have savored double talk as a revolt against monolithic male authority, and yet I have, meanwhile, quietly bowed to the cult of the individual genius, atomistic and apolitical…” (177). This is as far as Jack Stillinger is willing to go as well. Having made the point that the interventions of authors’ helpers need to be acknowledged when deciding on the most ‘authoritative’ version of a particular work, Stillinger in the end, similarly to Koestenbaum and the majority of critics attempting to construct a case for collaborative authorship, conforms to the norm of illusory singularity:

… the myth of single authorship is a great convenience for teachers, students, critics, and other readers, as well as for publishers, agents, booksellers, librarians, copyright lawyers—indeed, for everyone connected with the production and reception of books, starting with the authors themselves. The myth is thoroughly embedded in our culture and our ordinary practices, including the ordinary practices of criticism and interpretation, for which, I would argue, it is an absolute necessity. The countering reality of multiple authorship is no threat to the continuing existence of the myth, nor… is there any compelling reason for wanting the myth to cease to exist.

(Stillinger 187)

What Stillinger does not take into account, though, is the fact that this “myth” is a very young one, as far as myths go, and that the “reality” he speaks of existed long before the myth was created. What is more, considering that literature as such is a construct of a sort, it is understandable that the notion of authorship is a construct as well. Consequently, a call for considering authorship as a form of collaboration is simply a call to replace one construct (singular genius) with another that would release the entire
CONCLUSION: RECOUNTING THE AUTHOR

The main task of this dissertation is rather simple: to detect certain common features of overtly collaborative authorship, and to possibly make the same features more recognizable in authorship that relies on open collaboration to a lesser degree.

*The Metaphor of Marriage and Its Implications* examines marriage as one of the metaphors most frequently employed in describing overtly collaborative authorship, and evaluates how useful this metaphor can be for understanding overtly collaborative authorship as well as all literary authorship. Here, the main examples will be *The Crown of Columbus* by Michael Dorris and Louise Erdrich, *A Romance: The Terrors of Dr Treviles* by Peter Redgrove and Penelope Shuttle, and *Autonauts of the Cosmoroute: A Timeless Voyage from Paris to Marseille* by Julio Cortázar and Carol Dunlop.

In the second chapter, *The Role of Singular Authorship in Openly Collaborative Writing*, the goal will be to show that literary authorship is developed and practiced in respect to the ways in which it is imagined. More precisely, the chapter will present the ways that the idea of authorship as a solitary endeavor influences and shapes literary partnerships. Here, the argument will show that the very concept of writing as a solitary activity prevents writers (or authors) from fully conceptualizing their unorthodox practice of collaboration, but that it can also provoke a creative response of a sort. Here, first of the three examples is the collaboration of Michael Dorris and Louise Erdrich, who simultaneously promoted overt collaboration and subscribed to a highly individualistic
notion of writing. Most of their texts were published under only one name, the name of whomever they designated as the primary writer. Yet the activity of this primary writer was not the only writerly activity resulting in the particular text, but was complemented by the efforts of the other partner, constituting a true collaboration. The second example, collaborative novel *Invisible Seattle* was written by an indeterminable number of writers, most of them committing small, random acts of writing, with only a handful of them having some partial control over the entire text. As an experiment in mass authorship, or mass writing, *Invisible Seattle* exhibits that writing acquires meaning only if all acts are perceived as indivisible parts of the process of writing, if no act of writing is considered as dominant over, or more important than the others. Finally, the case of *Caverns*, a collaborative novel orchestrated by Ken Kesey for the sake of his creative writing students at the University of Oregon, shows how writing as a skill is often acquired in groups that always involve at least some small degree of collaboration. Though this collaboration is tolerated in the academic setting, it is apparently looked down upon in the professional setting, while it would be reasonable to expect that writers who learn to write in collaboration, continue to write in a type of collaboration after they leave their learning environment.

The third chapter, *Singular Name Denoting Plural Responsibility*, fully introduces the notion of authorial responsibility as the key to understanding the collaborative aspect of all literary authorship. It is an analysis of the conventions connected to the naming of authors or, more specifically, the tendency that the author gets singularized simply by being named. Based, among other factors, on the fact that almost every text reaches its audience due to the efforts of more than one person (that person named as the text’s
author), as well as on the habit of literary collaborators to present their texts under singular pseudonyms, the chapter will show that the name of the author always implies an authorial plurality, and that it can be seen as an indication of at least minimum degree of collaboration. The case of J.D. Salinger’s retreat from the public life will be used to connect the notions of anonymity and responsibility with the writer-reader relationship and to illustrate how Salinger, by escaping the public and refusing to produce further texts, dispersed his authorial responsibility and distributed it among the members of his audience, thus constructing a special kind of collaboration. Collaborations of Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford will serve to prove that openly sharing authorial responsibility effectively erases any potential for constructing a semblance of the mythical genius. Even if one of the collaborators is considered an example of literary greatness (in this case it is Conrad) it is always at the expense of his collaborator (in this case Ford), and at the expense of their joint work. On the other hand, as in the case of Jorge Luis Borges and Adolfo Bioy-Casares, writers often actively seek and produce in collaboration to undermine and challenge the preconceived and restrictive notions of authorship.

Finally, *Text as the Other* will reposition the role of the text in the basic literary relationship. If authorship is to be imagined in terms of collaboration, it must be described as an open process, a process in which anyone can participate by interacting with the text. Yet for this idea to gain traction, the text needs to be imagined in a new way, as a type of a subject of its own, a subject-surrogate, not a mere object of manipulation, but a counterpart to either the reader or the writer allowing a higher level of interaction, interaction that can produce literary meaning. Conceived in these terms,
the text becomes a catalyst for all relationships and practices that are recognized as belonging to the process of authorship, and it is by entering into a dyadic relationship with the text itself that each participant in this process enters into a relationship with every other member of the authorial body.

To be sure, there are many other directions from which the subject of overtly collaborative authorships as well as the subject of the collaborativeness of all literary authorship can be addressed. The particular approach presented in this dissertation indicates that collaboration in literature has significant theoretical implications—meaning that it is not simply a matter of a curious writerly practice—but also that a considerably greater attention must be given to works of overt collaboration since they can greatly expand the understanding of literary authorship, but only if they are not treated as sporadic oddities. “The work of art is… always tending toward a collaborative status, “ is a thought, expressed in a manner of historical collaborative exchange of ideas, by James Thorpe, quoted by Jerome McGann, quoted by Jack Stillinger (Stillinger 48) who continues: “At the beginning of A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism… McGann finds fault with textual theories… that ‘so emphasize the autonomy of the isolated author as to distort our theoretical grasp of the ‘mode of existence of a literary work of art’ (a mode of existence which is fundamentally social rather than personal)” (Stillinger 48). It is the goal of this dissertation to discern the meaning and breath of this collaborative status that every work of art possesses. Hence, it presents a view of authorship as a collaborative effort, enhancing and not diminishing the role of the individual, especially those individuals to whom in the traditional division of literary labor belong only the seemingly passive or non-writerly roles (readers, designers, publishers etc.). And although the
collaborativeness in the process of the *book* production has been established by scholarship in the last couple of decades, especially in the realm of history of the book, the ‘inner’ collaboration, the one inside the *text* is still somewhat of a taboo. The view of literary authorship suggested here is that all authorship is collaborative, not because someone wishes to make it so, nor because the input of each person in a particular text can be quantified, but because the only way to correctly perceive literature and begin to assess its influence in the society is by acknowledging that it is a product of collaborative effort spanning both in time and space, connecting past, present and future, as well as all parts of the globe inhabited by people inhabited by languages. The consequence of this proposition is to liberate collaboration as a process of producing art and high quality literature. In other words, one does not *have to* be alone to make art, even more precise, one *is never* alone in the process of art production. Hence, the consequence of this research is to explain at least in part why so many overt collaborative novels have been neglected in literary history and to further the introduction of collaboration into the mainstream theory and practice.

Collaboration invites and instructs—it reveals the mechanism of literary creation, it redefines and challenges the domains of intimate, private, and public, and encourages individuals to participate actively in the system of literature. Or in words of Wayne Koestenbaum: “A double signature confers enormous interpretative freedom: it permits the reader to see the act of collaboration shadowing every word in the text [i.e. pointing towards authorship, the process of production]. Books with two authors are specimens of a relation and show writing to be a quality of motion and exchange, not a fixed thing” (Koestenbaum 2). Consequently, if the collaborativeness of all literary authorship is
acknowledged, there are many concepts and ideas that need to be reexamined including those of literary genius, national literature, and monolingual literature. Collaboration in authorship certainly challenges the notions that have created false dichotomies like those of the center vs. the periphery of literature, or high-brow (serious) and low-brow (trivial) writing, and sheds light on some old hierarchies still present in the way authorship and literature are perceived.

Authorship at this point is a vacant concept (has been vacated by Barthes, Foucault and others) and needs to be populated with multiple subjects. The purpose of this exercise must not be to populate the author function with a greater number of subjects who would dwell in it in dubious cohabitation, but to expand it to a point of disintegration from which it would come into existence only when someone would assume personal responsibility for a particular text. Thus, the author who in the second half of the 20th century died of loneliness is back, and not alone anymore. This seems to be a rather frivolous question similar to i.e. how many authors does it take to change a light bulb? How many subjects does the activity of authoring include? To answer that question is to answer what it essentially means to be an author. To acknowledge the multitude of authoring subjects is to acknowledge that the act of authoring is essentially an act of connecting those numerous subjects around and through a work of literature, or the system and the medium of literature, which is incidentally the purpose (or consequence) of any (creative) act.
The Metaphor of Marriage and Its Implications

The main challenge of discussing all literary authorship in terms of collaboration lies in the fact that overt collaborative authorship, as the type of authorship employing the greatest degree of collaboration, is most often seen as a distinct, isolated phenomenon, an aberration of a sort, an exception that only confirms the rule according to which authorship is generally practiced by solitary individuals who receive very little or no help from others. In other words, to take an exception (overt collaboration) and look for its elements in the rule (solitary or singular authorship), first necessitates a closer look at that exception. Even a superficial glance at some of the numerous descriptions of overt literary collaboration reveals that they contain a number of rather telling metaphors used to shed some light on particular creative relationships. As Bette London astutely points out, “the metaphors of closeness, intimacy, intertwining, and reciprocity that govern double-handed writing appeal to the visual imagination, exposing the sexual underpinnings of all creative activity and production” (London 72). For better or for worse, most of those metaphors evoke the dynamics of intimate relationships, and are thus hard to apply to examples of (nominally) singular authorship—it would be almost comical to describe solitary authorship by reaching for those “metaphors of closeness, intimacy, intertwining…” since the immediate questions such as with whom is the author close, or intimate, with whom does the author intertwine, could not be answered. Hence, one of the key obstacles to looking for (and finding) collaborativeness in all literary authorship lies in the fact that overt collaboration invites certain metaphors that almost seem to disqualify it from any wider discussion of authorship. As a result, overt
collaboration can easily be viewed a type of profoundly intimate, and consequently less public but at the same time inadequate type of authorship.

Among the metaphors in question, the metaphor of marriage is probably the most frequent one—the mere frequency with which this metaphor is evoked in discussions of collaboration seems to suggest that it fits there especially well, and that observing it more closely provides a deeper insight into the peculiarities of shared authorship. Therefore, this chapter examines some key characteristics of the metaphor of marriage in the context of overt collaborative authorship on three distinct examples of collaboration: *The Crown of Columbus* by Michael Dorris and Louise Erdrich, *A Romance: The Terrors of Dr Treviles* by Peter Redgrove and Penelope Shuttle, and *Autonauts of the Cosmoroute: A Timeless Voyage from Paris to Marseille* by Julio Cortázar and Carol Dunlop. Important to note here is that all these three examples are results of conjugal collaborations, chosen specifically because of that very fact. After all, if the metaphor of marriage is somehow found to fit less well with these cases of literary marriages, then it certainly cannot be adequately applied on the entire spectrum of collaborative authorship. At the same time, each of these three overt collaborations involved only two writing partners, which makes them significantly easier to describe and analyze than those projects involving dozens or even hundreds of contributors. However, as such, they are not necessarily a distinct subcategory of overt collaboration but merely its more manageable examples that will hopefully present a basis of the understanding of collaboration as a whole (and consequently as a property of all authorship) as well as lead to examples of overt collaboration among considerably greater number of participants.
MARRIAGE: ASPECTS OF A(N IM)PERFECT METAPHOR

At a glance, the metaphor of marriage would seem quite compatible with overt collaborative authorship, especially authorship of pairs or (married) couples. However, this metaphor is often applied not only to couples, and not only to heterosexual couples, which results in it turning into a somewhat limited, as well as limiting, shorthand for all authorship involving more than one person.

When Liz Was, for example, commented on her collaboration with Miekal And, she operated with a significantly broader definition of marriage: “I think really a person would have to be married to us to be able to collaborate with us. And those few whom we have worked (& struggled) with… are in a sense married to us, if intermittently” (in Drake 13), while the critics of Stephen King and Peter Straub predicted their partnership “would be like a teenage marriage… [and that the two would] ruin a good thing and wind up hating each other for life” (King in Ede & Lunsford 3). Most descriptions of collaborations, however, employ the metaphor in its quite literal sense; for example, when discussing collaborative (auto)biographical writing, Thomas Couser finds it “rather like marriages and other domestic partnerships: partners enter into a relationship of some duration, they make life together, and they produce an offspring that will derive traits of each of them. Each partner has a strong interest in the fate of that offspring, which will reflect on each in a different way. Much of this is true of any collaborative authorship…” (Couser 210). Even in the ‘less appropriate’ context of the Medieval spiritual collaboration of the hermitess and saint Dorothea of Montau with the priest Johannes of Marienwerder, the metaphor of marriage is evoked when God himself (sic) instructs them: “You both shall often take to heart how I have brought you together. I have united
you just as two people are bound to one another in marriage, and for this reason each of you shall take on the burdens of the other and help the other so that you both may come to eternal life” (in Benedict 67). And Katherine Bradley, who with Edith Cooper collaborated under a pseudonym as Michael Field, compared in a diary entry their collaboration to the relationship of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning by evoking the marriage metaphor: “Oh! love. I give thanks for my Persian [pet name for Edith]: Those two poets, man and wife, wrote alone; each wrote, but did not bless or quicken one another at their work; we are closer married” (Field 16). The result is that in terms of overt collaborative authorship this metaphor could potentially have a very significant meaning, though in each of the cases listed above, this meaning is slightly different: for Liz Was this metaphor implies a sort of a union that produces a singular entity, which allows her to inhabit that union with numerous subjects; in King and Straub’s case it denotes a reckless, unpremeditated, impulsive act that is bound to have negative consequences; for Causer it is a stable social institution; in the case of Dorothea of Montau and Johannes of Marienwerder, a sacred covenant; and for Katherine Bradley it symbolizes a form of intimacy that could be matched and surpassed by actually sharing literary creation. And if one here but considers the fact that marriage itself is a particularly complex phenomenon whose meaning constantly changes, and whose connotations shift from positive to negative depending on the cultural (or subcultural) context, it appears this is an extremely unsteady metaphor.
From a legal, as well as historical standpoint, marriage appears to be a relatively straightforward concept, “the status of a man and woman legally united as husband and wife” (Cooley & Tiffany 4). Proscribed and controlled by either governments or churches, it is an effort to arrange heterosexual relationships that are one of the key elements of every society. Yet, if as such the metaphor of marriage is applied on overt literary collaboration, it can be seen as an attempt to normalize what is otherwise an unorthodox practice: presenting collaboration as a marriage of a sort implies it is somehow within the laws governing literary creativity. Consequently, an author can be either ‘married’ or not, cannot be simultaneously both ‘married’ and ‘single,’ is in a way bound, his or her freedom is limited. Considering that all artistic creativity is most often considered synonymous with unbridled liberty of expression and thought, it would seem that ‘married’ writers are, to an extent, obstructed, hindered in their work, merely by virtue of association.

Of course, perceived ideally, marriage is a site of “mutual respect,” “cooperation,” and “harmony” (Blagojevic 220), which, if overt collaboration is perceived equally ideally, does not necessary appear to be problematic, but then again all interpersonal relationships are ideally imagined as having these qualities, meaning they are not exclusively inherent to the institution of marriage. Marriage is also linked to certain (relative) permanence (Blagojevic 223), it is a type of serious commitment—and surely any person involved in a literary collaboration would like to believe he or she is involved in a serious and, more or less, permanent creative relationship—however, at the same time marriage is very often pejoratively seen as “a synonym for ‘prison,’ ‘the
end’… threatening the individuality, integrity and freedom of the individual” (Blagojevic 225), which, if observed in the context of our discussion, implies that literary collaboration is limited and limiting when it comes to full realization of its individual member’s creative potentials.

**CREATIVE AND CONJUGAL COUPLING**

Still, the marriage metaphor suggests that the critical level of creative intimacy needed to establish collaborative literary authorship is achieved in a pair. This is, more or less, consistent with the fact that, regardless of their gender, the majority of collaborations include only two writers or nominal authors. Even in larger collaborative collectives, as Michael Farrell noted, “each member is likely to pair off and work more closely with one other person… [with m]ost episodes of creative work occur[ing] within these pairs” (Farrell 22-23). Arguably, this is due to the equilibrium that the double authorship provides, but Farrell articulates four (additional) important reasons why collaboration thrives particularly well when shared by two members…

… new ideas are more likely to emerge in creative dyads for several reasons. First, creativity is a form of deviance—doing something that authorities do not approve… ‘a secret sharer,’ enables the person to neutralize the guilt and anxiety inherent in the creative process… Second, as a consequence of the mirroring and the identification with one another, each member of the dyad feels more cohesive, invests more in the self, and takes his own ideas more seriously. Each individual’s wild ideas are brought to light and given a hearing. Third, the open exchange in free, often playful interaction allows the linking of conscious and unconscious thought from both minds… and the associations result in new combinations that might never have occurred… Finally, once the
ideas emerge, as each plays the role to the critic for the other, the ideas are reworked into useful components for the emerging shared vision.

(Farrell 158)

In a creative dyad described by Farrell, the basic condition is that of (at least relative) equality of its members, with less opportunity for either individual to be outnumbered or outvoted. However, marriage itself does not necessarily imply that equality, especially if taken into account that some feminist critics consider it to be the fundamental institution of the patriarchal society, and its main purpose to place female creativity under male control. What is more, considering that marriage is a traditional (and legally recognized) institution, it may be hard to see it as a hotbed of delinquency, yet the examples that follow will illustrate to what extent this changes when marriage (and the corresponding sexuality) goes beyond its seemingly narrow social role and into the field of artistic creation. Likewise, it may be hard to immediately recognize the “playful” side that Farrell speaks of to the conjugal “interaction,” but, again, this playfulness is very much a factor in the works of collaborative couples. Indeed the majority of overt collaborations (regardless of the number of participants) emphasize and even exaggerate this playfulness, which suggests that, if anything, those who participate in them (whether married or not) seek to go beyond the serious, formal norms such as those that are the mark of the institution of marriage.

**INTIMACY IN MARRIAGE AND WRITING**

Still, marriage, if considered not only in legally proscribed terms, implies a considerable degree of intimacy among the partners. When attempting to look into literary
relationships it is important to have in mind that these are also at the same time ‘real’ relationships, meaning that along with their literary function they also have a strong social or emotional function, making it difficult to determine whether the two functions should be observed separately. As Don Bachardy admitted regarding the creative part of his relationship with Christopher Isherwood, “[t]he collaboration was designed… as a means to keep us together” (in Salwak 124), and this can, to a certain degree, be said of the majority if not all collaborative joint ventures that are at the same time intimate or romantic partnerships, regardless of the sexual orientation of their members. Every overt or direct collaboration by a certain number of contemporaries also either stems from or results in personal (non-literary) relationships, although these relationships are not necessarily marked by the level of intimacy suggested by marriage as a metaphor.

Any description of a(ny) collaboration as a marriage (of a sort) suggests there exits among collaborators a type and a level of intimacy comparable to that existing between spouses. According to Lynne Snead, a “talent development specialist,” “relationship, shared values, shared vision, shared creativity, and fun” are supposed to be “collaboration ‘enhancers’” (in McGoldrick & McGoldrick 91), meaning that any relationship, other than the literary, between two people can enhance or intensify their joint literary efforts. However, this is not necessarily always the case. “Though we share much, the secret part of ourselves remains our writing,” claims the biographer Michael Holroyd about his marriage to the novelist Margaret Drabble (Salwak 38), suggesting that writers, whether working together or not, are somehow by nature of their profession intimately more connected to their writing than to their spouses. The type of privacy that solitary writers insist upon takes precedence even before the intimacy they might share
with their partners, as in the case of Nadine Gordimer who lived with Reinhold Cassirer “sharing everything else,” but never letting him see any of her work in progress (Salwak 136). Furthermore, there are numerous examples of married collaborators who nevertheless write separately (the McGoldricks, Ascher/Straus, as well as Dorris and Erdrich), which suggests that the intimacy resulting from a collaborative relationship is not quite compatible, though it may overlap with the intimacy usually associated with marriage.

**Patriarchy or Hierarchy**

Unfortunately, if the perspective shifts from the interpersonal or intimate aspect of marriage to a broader social side of this phenomenon, it can be claimed that as an institution marriage played (and to an extent still plays) an important role in securing patriarchal order. As Lisa Adkins puts it, “heterosexuality [is viewed] as the set of relations through which men control and exploit women’s labour” (Adkins 34), which is equally true for manual, intellectual, or creative labor. There are numerous instances of married couples where the collaborative relationship was governed by a hierarchical division of labor, with one partner being the primary writer (and, consequently, the author) and the other functioning as a sort of secretarial helper performing all those tasks falling under Ruth Perry and Martine Watson Brownly’s category of “mothering the mind” (Perry & Brownly 14). In many cases, along with proofreading or editing, the so called “writers’ wives” took upon themselves to sanitize the work of their spouses in order to prevent the intimate from leaking into the sphere of the public (Salwak 4, 11). Often it was women who resorted to assuming diverse, and even exotic roles, only to
conceal the collaboration that was taking place. The most extreme example must be that of George Yeats, who served as a psychic aid to W. B. Yeats; if seen as a medium, she was only transferring a message from some (transcendental) source, and thus reestablishing and not in any way challenging the traditional notion that all originality comes from a singular source and not from active collaboration.

Surely, if patriarchy is observed as the dominant paradigm governing the majority of relationships within a given society, it can with no difficulty be detected in all aspects of literary production and all relationships on which this production is based. The role of women in publishing, for example, is still being reevaluated, but the fact remains: this industry was historically under the male dominance, even at the time when writers such as Nathaniel Hawthorne complained about the “d—d mob of scribbling women” or found, as George Henry Lewes in 1850, that their previously undisputed domain was being “overrun” by women of letters (qtd. in Helsinger et al. 4). Even today there are certain literary institutions that favor the male author, like The New Yorker that has entire issues with no significant contributions by women (Sauers “New Yorker Boycotted for Lack of Female Writers”). Herein lies, at least in part, the reason to consider the effect that patriarchal order might have on collaborations: if the gender inequality is prevalent in society, it could, at least in theory, transfer onto the creative relationship. Indeed, if collaborations are (metaphorical) marriages shared by partners who are privileged by the society and those who are not, then not all collaborations are as free and egalitarian as they could ideally be. Consequently, one could agree with those feminist critics who

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1 In her analysis of the Yeatses’ collaboration, Bette London concludes that George’s role was possibly less secondary as she made it appear, and that she was less subordinate than the relationship might imply, since she traded her psychic services for W. B.’s marital favors (London 179-181). In fact, as Margaret Mills Harper points out, the entire profession of “mediumship” was far less passive than might be conceived, which implies that the role of a medium should be regarded as a role of certain authority (Harper 11-12).
observe heterosexual collaborations merely as an extension of the patriarchal society “project[ing] spousal collaboration as inevitably hierarchical,” (London 184). Having in mind that the patriarchal society only started to disintegrate in the twentieth century and that it is still far from completely crumbling, as well as that heterosexual marriage is one of the key institutions of that society, feminist skepticism regarding heterosexual collaboration might be well justified. After all, in traditional terms, heterosexuality seems to imply hierarchy, or vice versa, as Sarah Oerton suggests in *Beyond Hierarchy: Gender, Sexuality and the Social Economy*, finding that “less heterosexual/patriarchal processes and practices of power and control are more likely to be constitutive of less or non-hierarchical organization, whereas hierarchical organizations are inevitably ‘contaminated’ by heterosexuality” (Oerton 65). However, it is noticeable that those heterosexual collaborations which fall victim to the patriarchal order usually avoid to be nominally labeled as overt collaborations, or are even unable to produce representative (or even finished) texts.

To clarify, the negative connotations of the metaphor of marriage can possibly be best seen on examples of couples who did not produce any joint, overtly collaborative work, but who nevertheless performed literary labor one alongside the other. Among these, probably the most prominent is the example of both intimate and professional relationship of Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald, a relationship that disintegrated when Zelda dared to incorporate some of the couple’s shared life into her novel *Save Me the Waltz*, material that Scott claimed rightfully belonged to him only. As Lynette Felber points out, Scott Fitzgerald was among those writers who insisted “that his partner stop writing altogether” (Felber 89), suggesting their marriage was more of a scene of competition,
rather than collaboration. Although some, like James Mellow, find that in the Fitzgeralds’
relationship fiction became a “form of private communication… a method of discourse
about their marriage… to play the roles they had not managed to play in the reality of
their marriage,” Felber concludes that “[t]heir conflict, in the relationship and its
fictionalization, centers on a struggle for exclusive possession of shared material, for the
role of the writer, and for a unified self” (Felber 90). Despite attempts at overt
collaboration (Felber 91), Scott Fitzgerald was adamant not to share with his wife the
prestige of the singular author: “I am the professional novelist, and I am supporting you.
That is all my material. None of it is your material” (in Felber 94), thus formally denying
the fact that by relying in his writing so heavily on events he shared with Zelda he was in
a way involved in a literary collaboration. Theirs was a situation of most married couples
who experience the same events, and share many, if not all aspects of life, but Scott
Fitzgerald opted for a rigid patriarchal stance that made any overt (or fully productive)
collaboration impossible.

It suffices here to evoke the case of Ellen and William Craft, who for all practical
purposes collaborated on Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom (published in 1860), an
account of their escape from Southern slavery, but who nevertheless produced a first
person (singular) male narrative, and who were in public represented by William since at
that time women were discouraged from speaking publicly. In the Fitzgeralds’s case, the
still heavily patriarchal society and his literary fame made it possible for Scott Fitzgerald
to consider Zelda herself as his own private property: “Sometimes I don’t know whether
Zelda isn’t a character that I created myself” (Milford in Felber 97), thus presenting her,
and their marriage, as mere extensions of his own person, and at the same time as a
reflection of both the patriarchal society and the equally patriarchal order governing literary production of that era.

**THE BATTLE OF THE SEXES**

But even if male dominance is not achieved, in marriage or in literary collaboration, it apparently fuels the struggle that takes place within a marriage, and thus, if this metaphor is applied onto literary collaboration, within creative partnerships. Even Wayne Koestenbaum’s descriptions of male homosexual collaboration “as one man’s willful domination over a passive partner, or, less frequently, as an erotic trade between equals” (Koestenbaum 96), further indicate that ‘maleness’ might indeed be that destabilizing factor, since men are traditionally conditioned or expected to pursue dominance and power.

Though they were not legally married and never openly collaborated with each other, Anaïs Nin and Henry Miller nevertheless developed a type of collaborative dynamics, which is probably bound to occur when two writers live together and share a romantic relationship, but also a type of dynamics that was based more on conflict than cooperation. According to Felber, the pair produced “parallel texts in which they developed a pattern of intertextual appropriation and parody” (Felber 37). More precisely, Miller “stole” from Nin, exploiting liberally what he perceived as the raw material of her diaries, forcing her to “go where [he] cannot go,” into, as Felber points out, “the feminine discourse that only women know” (Felber 48). In this, Miller was as much a ‘thief’ as Scott Fitzgerald, who also mined his wife’s diary for inspiration (Felber
and even appropriated for himself alone “Our Own Movie Queen,” probably the only story on which the Fitzgeralds ever truly collaborated (Felber 91-92).

Yet the result of Nin and Miller’s relationship, although not an overt literary collaboration, was much less tragic than that of the Fitzgeralds. It was not necessarily idyllic—Felber speaks of “textual retribution” (Felber 38) between Nin and Miller, noting that the two “characterize[d] their critical exchanges using metaphors drawn from fighting and wrestling” (Felber 42). Here, of course, lies the basic problem with using metaphoric language: there is a chance that mentioning ‘marriage’ in the context of collaborative authorship might have the very same effect as mentioning “fighting and wrestling.” A nominally singular author can also be engaged in similar “fighting and wrestling” (with his/her predecessors or peers, for example) but chances are that the (critical) public will identify with him/her regardless of whether s/he win or looses that fight or match, whereas in a case of collaborative couple the public cannot achieve the same level of identification—especially if they produce individually, as Nin and Miller did—hence, the public has to choose.

However, “fighting and wrestling” can be seen in a less sinister light if they are indeed purely metaphorical. In fact, they can be recognized as an essential part of the creative process, leading Felber to conclude that “Nin’s struggle over an appropriate style and form for her writing was instrumental in her discovery and articulation of the aesthetic that earned her an international readership” (Felber 42). For all practical purposes, this is not recognized as a type of collaboration, but is rather a triumph of a female individual over the dictate of the patriarchy, hence, again, as in the example of the Fitzgeralds, we have no fully (or overtly) collaborative texts.
This, however, is not to say that even the most overt, productive collaborations manage to steer clear of any conflict. Of course, in that context ‘struggle’ can have a less negative connotation. As Nikoo and James McGoldrick admit, “[d]espite thirteen years of marriage, when we started to write together, we found ourselves on a ‘first date’ when it comes to this new battle of creative wills” (McGoldrick & McGoldrick xiii). By this, they confirm that shared creativity entails a certain degree of conflict, but at the same time they seem to suggest that in its essence this conflict has nothing to do with marriage, or gender inequality, but that it is an inherent part of any labor that involves a number of individuals.

**CREATING A UNIT**

There is, however, one other aspect of the marriage metaphor that the McGoldricks illustrate quite well, and that is the fact that the married couple is treated as a sort of a unit, a singular entity that happens to consist of two individuals. In terms of collaborative authorship, the McGoldricks put it succinctly: “Not knowing ‘who wrote what’ is the ultimate goal” (McGoldrick & McGoldrick 88). This is particularly true of those collaborations that present themselves as nominally singular. However, the suggested total merger can become quite uncomfortable; for one thing, agreeing to share a single identity can deprive a couple of the plural perspective(s)—one of the biggest advantages of collaboration—but it can also lead to one or both partners’ loss of self. Expressing her doubts in the prospect of forming what Ted Hughes called a “single shared mind” (in Huston 36), Sylvia Plath diagnosed, “[b]etween us there are no barriers—it is rather as if neither of us—or especially myself—had any skin…” (in Huston 35). Consequently, in
order to, as Nancy Huston puts it, “prevent her identity from flowing totally into Ted’s,” Plath decided to stop showing Hughes her work: “I must be myself—make myself—and not let myself be made by him” (Plath in Huston 36), or in other words to end (or at least to reduce the intensity of) their collaboration.

Once again, the role of a wife proved to be too limiting; Plath found it equally uncomfortable as did Zelda Fitzgerald, or even Elizabeth Barret who in her “The Romaunt of the Page,” a poem about a woman who follows her loved one into battle disguised as his page, openly questioned her choice: “Have I renounced my womanhood, [f]or wifehood unto thee?” (in Pollock 32). Surely, in the long run, the answer to Barret’s question was negative, her marriage to Robert Browning did not compromise her artistic integrity. What is more, for a considerable while she was even the more acclaimed poet of the two, yet she was well aware that in the merger of creative identities, if the one plus one was to equal one, it was the woman’s identity that was more likely to get lost. Of course, this was more often the case in examples of nominally singular authorships where women (though not exclusively women) serve as silent (or silenced) partners, but Barret’s anxiety also reflected the position in which any woman poet found herself when attempting to participate in the male-dominated literary world.

**THE ROLE OF (HETERO)SEXUALITY**

As problematic as the metaphor of marriage might seem, the descriptions of collaborative couples get even more complex and problematic when the focus is turned slightly to the issue of sexuality, or more precisely the issue of heterosexuality. While this issue is not necessarily evoked in the same breath with the metaphor of marriage, it is nevertheless
implied in it, leading Linda Karell to suggest that “the writers do construct themselves as an enigma when they link their creativity to the heterosexual romance script, in which each individual is made into a whole and complete writer by virtue of ever deepening layers of intimacy that culminate in their marriage” (Karell 37). This link between sexuality (as an aspect of marriage) and creativity places collaborative authorship in a completely different context than that of the supposedly singular authorship i.e. from the standpoint of the traditional narrative of literary creation, collaboration relies on exaggerated physicality, the sexual act seems as much as a prerequisite as it is a consequence of text-making. Here a writer is in both creative and intimate relationship with another writer, whereas the prototypical solitary writer’s (or, consequently, author’s) intimate relationships (potentially) lack that creative aspect.

When explaining his relationship with Sheila Ascher, with whom he wrote a number of novels under a joint name Ascher/Straus, Dennis Straus is rather curt: “Joint work of any kind requires great intimacy, trust, mutual respect, even shared experience… both of us live through the same experience; each of us takes notes on the experience; one of us decides to do something coherent with it and uses both sets of notes to do so” (Straus 5-6). Of the items from Straus’ list, it is the first one, “great intimacy,” that accounts for that basic difference between how nominally singular literary authorship is imagined (and practiced) and how collaborative literary authorship is imagined (and practiced), since in the case of singular authorship there is no one the author is supposed to be intimate with (at least not in shared creation), while in collaborative authorship the intimacy between two partners carries a significant, if not truly “great” importance.
Alternatively, overt collaboration can be described predominantly in terms of sexuality, meaning without the wider social context inherent to the metaphor of marriage. In *Double Talk: The Erotics of Male Literary Collaboration* Wayne Koestenbaum describes literary collaboration as a “metaphorical sexual intercourse” (Koestenbaum 3). For him, “[a] writer turns to a partner not from a practical assessment of advantages, but from superstitious hope, a longing for replenishment and union that invites baroquely sexual interpretation” (Koestenbaum 4). This is hardly a conventional description of authorship, and as such incompatible with the notion of singular authorship, which only serves to propel collaboration outside of the domain of ‘proper’ or conventional authorship. However, in order to even be considered a type of authorship, collaboration needs to share a significant enough number of traits with singular authorship. At the same time, certain key aspects of collaboration should be also present in singular authorship. If indeed, “[a] sexual economy is often, if not always, at play in collaborative ventures” (Harper 97), then some trace of that same economy should be present in the declaratively singular authorship, and that is simply not possible considering that, unlike solitary authorship, that “sexual economy” depends on the participation of more than one subject. However, observing all authorship and even overt collaboration in the exclusive context of sexuality, may result in a somewhat limited view, a view that is potentially devoid of a deeper level of intimacy. That is to say, while the metaphor of sexuality within the metaphor of marriage can suggest greater intimacy, and consequently greater creative potential, on its own sexuality could lead towards somewhat hedonistic descriptions of collaboration, such as those by Koestenbaum—descriptions that are colorful but potentially misleading since they do not necessarily reflect the level of commitment that a
creative relationship demands. As a result, the sexual aspect of the marriage metaphor can provide further information about overtly collaborative authorship, but only if it remains within the context of that metaphor, and not if it overshadows it.

**RECAPITULATION: A PERFECT OR IMPERFECT METAPHOR?**

If all the aspects of the marriage metaphor are considered, it appears indeed to be an improper one to use for shared literary authorship. Mainly, it could be viewed as an attempt to legalize (or institutionalize) collaboration, which, unfortunately, also has an effect of turning it into a quaint and limited phenomenon—a type of authorship that ‘needs’ an official approval in a form of a marriage certificate. Additionally, this metaphor potentially subjects literary collaboration to the same misconceptions and prejudice that crop up in the (pejorative) discourse regarding marriage, as well as to all the negative aspects of the institution of marriage, namely the fact that it is often an instrument of patriarchal order and gender inequality. What is more, it also implies a certain loss of identity suffered by both partners.

But, on the other hand, this metaphor certainly points towards the dyadic organization of collaborative authorship. It emphasizes the intimate aspect of collaboration and invites a serious consideration of the role that sexuality as a symbol of that intimacy plays in examples of shared literary creation.

**1—MICHAEL DORRIS AND LOUISE ERDRICH: THE CROWN OF COLUMBUS**

In the more recent past, probably the most (in)famous embodiment of the conjugal metaphor was the collaboration of Michael Dorris and Louise Erdrich, who turned the
fact that they were married to each other and that they wrote together into somewhat of a trademark. According to one critic, for them “authorship [was] a dimension of matrimony” (Chavkin & Chavkin 115), whereas another labeled theirs as a “matrimonial collaboration” (Chavkin & Chavkin 173). Holly Laird points out that Dorris and Erdrich “cultivate[d] the romance of heterosexual marriage” (Laird 226). What is more, “their self-descriptions promote[d] their mythologization as a late-twentieth-century literary romance comparable to that of the Brownings in the nineteenth” (Laird 228).

Unfortunately, their particular romance ended rather tragically, providing only further evidence that when both marriage and authorship are shared, there can be no clear line separating the two.

However, when it comes to their only overtly or nominally collaborative novel, The Crown of Columbus, there seems to have been no considerable innovations involved in its creation: if Dorris and Erdrich are to be seen as a model of collaborative marriage, then this model relies on separate, solitary, individual acts of writing, which is consistent with practices of nominally singular authors who either receive some help from their spouses or partners, or create in collaboration but opt for a singular pseudonym. What is more, by the time they began working on The Crown of Columbus, Dorris and Erdrich had already started to promote the idea of the two of them as a single author. Hence, it would seem that at least in these two respects their collaboration was truly a marriage, in a very rigid sense of the word, with the two of them forming a single entity, while attempting to separate their professional activity (writing) from their intimate relationship.
Consequently, when *The Crown of Columbus* finally reached the critics, the verdict was merciless: Dorris and Erdrich were guilty of not being themselves, their respective individualities, at least in the context of literary authorship, were lost. The novel was found to be “far less distinctive and idiosyncratic than any of their independent [our emphasis] ventures” (Kakutani C25). This particular critic found it easier to analyze *The Crown of Columbus* by ignoring the collaborative origins of Dorris and Erdrich’s other works: when compared to works of single authors, overt collaboration appears more unliterary, more fragmented and less unified, as well as less consistent, if not even inconsistent. Another critic, Annette Jaimes, concluded that “in collaboration as literary artists [Dorris and Erdrich] have chosen to engage in a pandering of their art”, deliberately ignoring the fact that “their art” was equally a product of collaboration as was the “literary kitsch” of *The Crown of Columbus* (Jaimes 59), since the pair claimed all their work was to a considerable degree a product of collaboration—overt (they acknowledged it publicly), though not nominal collaboration (it was published under only his or only her name). In this, Jaimes confirmed the traditional, conservative view that collaboration by its virtue, or more precisely, by the lack of any virtue, produces inferior literary works, works devoid of any artistic value, intended merely for the indiscriminate mass market. Here the critics have succumbed to temptation to compare *The Crown of Columbus* to Dorris and Erdrich’s other works on the most superficial level—the former has two names on its cover, the later only one. However, they echoed the traditional trope evoked by critics encountering overt collaboration: “adult readers will only be intrigued by the mystery of who contributed what” (Seymour 135),² which suggests that Dorris and

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² This particular verdict was used by a critic weighing the merits of Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford’s *The Inheritors* and *Romance*. 
Erdrich have achieved that “ultimate goal” defined by the McGoldricks, by creating a text in which their respective inputs could not be identified.

No doubt, The Crown of Columbus is a rather light and frivolous, possibly even self-indulgent piece of fiction, designed for a particular occasion, the Columbus Quincentenatial, rather than an occasion in itself, but if compared to the rest of Dorris and Erdrich’s oeuvre it simply cannot be seen as an unfortunate coupling of two individually respected writers, since their oeuvre is, as they insisted, itself collaborative. In The Crown of Columbus, Dorris and Erdrich do not attempt to create a new model of authorship, as they do not create new roles for their characters, roles that would supercede the traditional gender roles. The product of their marital collaboration is a novel about a marriage, and a quite conventional marriage at that. The only difference is that they switch the traditional roles around, as noted by Laird, turning Vivian, their female protagonist, into a dedicated professional and Roger, her counterpart, into a stay-at-home father. Hence, the strict division of gender roles is not shattered or substituted by an egalitarian alternative. Rather, as both, Karell (61) and Laird (241) have noticed, Roger and Vivian swap roles and thus affirm the dictate of tradition according to which the spheres of private and professional, intimate and public cannot mix, but are lodged in a rigid system of hierarchies, one subordinate to the other, which is, more or less, what the traditional notion of marriage implies, or at least what it serves to establish and maintain. This, along with the notion that marriage is the main front in the struggle between the genders—Vivian and Roger are involved in constant competition throughout the novel—places The Crown of Columbus safely in the domain of marriage-like

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3 In all fairness, Dorris and Erdrich admittedly conceived of the book some years before writing it (Chavkin & Chavkin 209), though there is little doubt it was “pushed into production” by publishers eager to seize the moment by having two writers of Native American heritage revise the tale of discovery.
collaboration, but, again, only if we are dealing with a rather arid, and particularly unappealing idea of marriage.

2—PETER REDGROVE & PENEOPE SHUTTLE: THE TERRORS OF DR TREVILES AND THE GLASS COTTAGE

However, the very existence of text(s) could be seen as an evidence that—regardless of the differences, regardless of all the negative consequences of being conditioned by the society to behave as either male or female—heterosexual collaborative couples who have produced it (them) have in that process of literary production managed to surpass the limitations inherent to the traditional concept of marriage and sexuality.

Among these couples, one of the most prominent is the example of Peter Redgrove and Penelope Shuttle, a pair of British poets and writers, who along with a couple of intriguing novels also produced two rather influential volumes on the female menstrual cycle. While all of their novels, published in the mid-1970s, explore the transformative possibilities of (hetero)sexuality, questioning the divisions of sex and gender, it is in A Romance: The Terrors of Dr Treviles (1974) that they fully develop their “hermaphrodite” or metamorphic imagery in an attempt to establish a freer, or socially unconditioned (hetero)sexuality. When in The Terrors of Dr Treviles, Redgrove and Shuttle ‘dream’ of Oliver Hardy and Stan Laurel as each other’s wife (12) they point towards a number of misconceptions regarding collaboration (and, in a sense, regarding marriage), creating a complex tableau designed to illustrate the main characteristic of collaborative relationships, that of the transmogrifying heterogeneity which becomes most apparent when two subjects are in closest possible proximity. As suggested, in such a relationship each individual is given an opportunity to be the other without ceasing to
be oneself. It is within a couple, or within a pair that all differences and all similarities between the self and the other can be best observed. What is more, within a couple these differences and similarities can be further investigated and questioned, as well as reshaped, if need be.

To return to Redgrove and Shuttle’s image: Laurel and Hardy’s most obvious similarity (they are both men) is made less obvious by a number of glaring differences (one is thin, the other fat; one melancholic, the other choleric…), but by turning them into each other’s wives, Redgrove and Shuttle emphasize both the mutuality and mutability of their existence—sharing a common goal, each exists (or, in banal terms, is funny) because of the other, and each has an opportunity to be different because of the other; alone they would be less noticeable, less peculiar… less funny. Alone, each would possess a lesser identity, not lesser when compared to an ideal, but lesser when compared to the shared identity each of them participates in, that shared self they have actively constructed. After all, the entire novel can be seen as “the search for the self or another’s self,” as Brian Louis Pearce puts it in his introduction to the 2006 Stride Publications edition (8). Or even a search for another self, we would add. The result is that the norms regarding (hetero)sexuality are thoroughly challenged; in their writing Redgrove and Shuttle have an opportunity to take on any number of identities, leading Holly Laird to conclude:

For all this concentration on their own heterosexual relation, however, there is something ‘queer’ about the ways the gender distinction operates in Redgrove and Shuttle’s stories and arguments, as in the moment when Redgrove and Shuttle consider the possibility that one might ‘unlearn’ the sex difference.

(Laird 161)
Some certainties are necessary in order to maintain (or anchor) one’s existence, one’s identity; society offers maleness or femaleness as those very certainties. In Laird’s terms, to consider sex (or gender) as fixed and unchangeable is to perceive it as one of life’s certainties. However, when a relationship with another person becomes a certainty, all other certainties can be reinvestigated, can change, and it is that potential for change that can be perceived as “queer[ness],” which takes a relationship, intimate and literary, well across the bounds of the traditionally perceived marriage and the set of values it implies.

Relying on a different set of certainties, the feminist critics who observe heterosexual collaboration are, however, ready to project the pattern of sexual inequality on the subjects of their investigation by looking for signs of male domination or flaws to the feminist stance of female partners, as was apparent in the case of Dorris and Erdrich, where some found Erdrich to be “a parrot for Dorris’s ideas” (Kaplan and Rose in Laird 226). Likewise, as Laird notes, “The Hermaphrodite Album [Redgrove and Shuttle’s collaborative volume of poetry] ‘infuriated’ critics, ‘who wanted to know whether it was a man or a woman who had written a given poem’” (Laird 149). Yet the truth is that a heterosexual collaboration offers its members to be more than just a man or more than just a woman, and any oppression that comes from such a relationship is the oppression of seemingly limitless freedom to choose and shape one’s identities, as can be read from Redgrove and Shuttle’s *The Terrors of Dr Treviles*…

…my chief fear was of not being a woman. Surgery made me mad because I wanted to give myself a man’s body. I could not stop the metamorphoses. He taught me to hate the magic, to settle for a one reality, the reality accepted among folk like me. Existence was bearable that way. Otherwise, it was as though somebody constantly swung the handle and changed the plots.
Hence, a heterosexual collaborative authorial pair suffers double the authorial anxiety, from one end they struggle against the pejorative sexual prejudice that enters the literary context through criticism (questions, for example, of whether he wrote the ‘male’ parts and she the ‘female’ ones), and on the other, they struggle with the innumerable possible identities they could claim, create, and inhabit. In *The Terrors of Dr Treviles* this double anxiety can be read from two endings of the book: the prose part of the novel ends with “THE END OF THE TERRORS OF DR TREVILES” (156), yet, it is followed by an appendix of poems attributed to one of the characters, “ROBYN’S CANDLE POEMS,” after which names of both Redgrove and Shuttle appear in capital letters with the end announced as “THE END OF OUR BOOK” (177). This might also be a response to those somewhat hostile critics who demanded that Redgrove and Shuttle reveal authorship of individual poems collected in *The Hermaphrodite Album* (1973). Certainly, it is an unequivocal, even loud claim of authorship no singular author would consider making, and its function, to grant Redgrove and Shuttle the benefit of the doubt and take it they are not merely bragging, is equally to reinforce their mutual (hermaphrodite?) identity and their individual (male and female) ones, as it is to emphasize their role of the authors which is both fictionalized when referred to in the text of the novel (45, 50, 53, 102, 106-107), and realized in the writing of the text.

In this way, they boldly step out of the bounds of the marriage metaphor, since their shared freedom as well as their individual freedoms are enhanced through their collaboration. In fact, even if it is considered that they play with the idea of marriage, and that they actually share a marriage along with their literary work, labeling their
relationship as a ‘marriage’ would be a gross understatement, since that label could only
obstruct the understanding of their literary plan—the construction of individuality not
from singularity but from plurality.

This plan becomes most obvious in *The Glass Cottage: A Nautical Romance*
where Redgrove and Shuttle, simply by refusing to name the protagonists (playing with
the genre of murder mystery) create a multitude of *I*-s, one flowing into the other.

Although certain characters step into the foreground, they are identified with generic
titles such as “Poet” or “Professor,” and the fragmentation of the majority of the cast
allows the construction of composite figures:

> I can break out in whatever forms may be strange enough to pierce your
defences, your defences which soon make grotesquery of my mysteries. I
take a scrap here and a scrap there, a face from poor S, and a hue from
the Red Indian, a dish from the grillroom on the quarter-deck, the
sensations of a sunbather; pressing on your ways with my being, until
perhaps the whole rotten and silly façade will break away and you will
enter your birthright.

(*The Glass Cottage* 154-155)

This results in all characters being connected in an organic way, the murdered girl as well
as her murderer exist in a form of permanent plurality:

> Was he the poet, the playwright, the elderly psychologist, the professor,
the Indian chief, the actor, for all became experts on America in their
own ways, even the one who refused to attain America, and plunged
instead into the boiling wake inside her waters, concerning whose act a
book was written by a lady who travelled the continent looking at it as
though through his eyes.

(*The Glass Cottage* 91)
All these characters are loaded onto an ocean liner, *SS Messenger*, a large traveling womb, a seed pod (123-124), an embodiment of the book itself, “a large closed volume... an inter-library loan between Goode Olde England and the Great Universal States” (56-57). Laden with bodies transforming into pages of printed text as well (36) and characters changing sex (173), the ship, as well as the novel, carry a type of plurality that challenges any preconceived or traditional notions of sex or gender, a type of plurality for which the metaphor of marriage, in its most liberal meaning, is simply too confining.

Lastly, of all three main examples presented in this chapter, it is Redgrove and Shuttle who managed to fully develop the potential plurality of identities that the metaphor of marriage suggests. While Dorris and Erdrich never quite succeeded in securing for their joint authorial entity the same attention and respect that they each individually enjoyed—their nominally collaborative projects were criticized the most exactly for being collaborative—Redgrove and Shuttle multiplied their authorship to the point where each of them separately as well as both of them together earned relatively equal shares of recognition. In other words, all three (or four) authorial entities: Peter Redgrove, Penelope Shuttle, and Peter Redgrove and Penelope Shuttle, secured each his or her or their place in the literary world, not at each other’s expense, but rather through the fact that they communicated with and complemented each other, creating a plural alternative to the (nominally) singular relevance that is largely the norm. What is more, Redgrove and Shuttle have managed to take the model of literary marriage beyond the one offered by, for example, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning—they shared their creative process freely, apparently without any fear of loss on individual selves. Hence it was possible for Penelope Shuttle to title her 2006 collection of poems
Redgrove’s Wife⁴ without jeopardizing her identity as an independent woman poet, which can, in part, be seen as a sign of the times that have changed considerably since the days of the Brownings, but must also be taken as an indication of the strength of Shuttle’s literary authority, as well as the strength of Redgrove and Shuttle’s creative relationship.

3) JULIO CORTÁZAR & CAROL DUNLOP: AUTONAUTS OF THE COSMOROUTE

Of course, the only evidence of that relationship can be found in Redgrove and Shuttle’s texts, while the conditions of their work, possibly quite similar to those of Dorris and Erdrich, remain secret. However, there is another example, a text that contains the descriptions of its own creation and as such contradicts the notion of the McGoldricks and Dorris and Erdrich, that marriage and the intimate should be separated from the creative and literary. Autonauts of the Cosmoroute: A Timeless Voyage from Paris to Marseille is travel log (that just might have stepped the border into a novel) by Julio Cortázar and Carol Dunlop, an account of a peculiar journey that normally takes between seven and eight hours to complete (even in the 1980s), but that took them a whole month. In it, Julio Cortázar, an already renowned writer, and Carol Dunlop, a photographer and a writer, divided their investigation of intimacy between all highway rest areas from Paris to Marseille, stopping on each of them to make pseudoscientific observations of the modern life in flux while articulating their private rebellion against the pressure of consumerist alienation. By alternating detailed and formulaic descriptions of each rest area with short essays on love and personal freedom, along with occasional fictional elements, they have created a lucid account of what it means to be a (creative) couple in

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⁴ Redgrove’s Wife commemorates the death of Peter Redgrove (he passed away in 2003), but it is most emphatically not a eulogy, nor a homage in any formal sense. Its task is rather, as Penelope Shuttle herself puts it, “the search for a renewal of life during difficult circumstances” (Redgrove’s Wife back cover)
the contemporary society (1980s). As such, this novel (of a sort) is an attempt to
(re)define the role and the mode of togetherness—by immersing themselves completely
into the (consumerist) society, Cortázar and Dunlop manage to almost completely escape
it, and are left (virtually) alone on one of France’s busiest highways. At the same time,
using an anachronistic form (and a matching style)—they approach the highways in the
same manner that Marko Polo approached the Orient or Christopher Columbus
approached the Caribbean—Cortázar and Dunlop create a log of a journey not across
geographical distances, but into intimate proximities.

Cortázar and Dunlop’s “expedition [is] solitary by nature” (Autonauts 34).
Together, Cortázar and Dunlop are “incredibly alone” (Autonauts 17), their togetherness
offsets, but also emphasizes the solitude each of them suffers as an individual; the feeling
of “solitude” (Autonauts 29) they experience seems almost ludicrous considering they
almost never leave each other’s side. While conducting an experiment that is in part
supposed to determine whether “absolute solitude is possible” (Autonauts 73), Cortázar
and Dunlop are in fact determining whether absolute solitary or limited-number-of-
participants authorship is possible, and the answer in both cases is negative. The intimacy
that exists within a couple, produces a type of isolation. A couple in its essence is the
most exclusive type of a group, its exclusivity deriving directly from the intimacy and
resulting in the isolation of the couple from the rest of the society. This isolation, one that
Martha Fleming refers to in her Trivia interview⁵, is equally if not more profound than
the isolation of an individual within the society in that it comes not from yearning for the
other but in finding, establishing contact with an other who embodies all others, who

⁵“I think being a couple is a very kind of isolating thing. I think there is a sort of a barrier past which
people have a tendency not to go, and that there is also a thing about being a couple that has to do with a
form of withdrawal from society (Kirk et al. 35).
embodies the world. Individuals who are no longer seeking the other from the position of
desperation of (sexual) desire address the world from a particular empowering vantage
point—their desire is no longer unfulfilled, they do not ‘need’ the world to feed their
desire. Since they are equal to each other, they expect to be considered as equal to the
world. The position of equality is the only moral form of power, yet the systems that
arrange societies, or the systems according to which societies function recognize as
power only that which subordinates one individual to the other, the power of oppression,
and therefore isolate those who have the power of equality as potentially detrimental to
the society. In Cortázar and Dunlop’s case, they risk being seen as “altogether too
satisfied with each other’s company” (Kirby), since they write for each other’s pleasure
and not to gain the favor of the critics who find their prose “self-indulgent [and]
amateurish” (Kirby), which is the society’s way of saying: “You don’t want to play with
me? Well, I think you talk funny!” As a result, if Cortázar and Dunlop are observed as
(only) a married couple (regardless of whether we take their collaboration into account or
not), they provide a particularly unusual model of marriage: they are anything but willing
to accept their place in the society based on the traditional description of marriage, but
constantly negotiate their relationship with the society—which constitutes a form of
insubordination, especially if every married couple would follow their lead.

In other words, Cortázar and Dunlop do not hide from the world. Quite the
contrary, they embrace it, but in most cases the world is too confused and embarrassed to
return their embrace. Their shared solitude on the autoroute is repeatedly broken by both
“expected and inevitable visitors” as well as “unexpected visitors” (Autonauts 73), same as
their dual authorship gets expanded to include family members and friends. They mobilize
their friends who provide them with fresh supplies at critical points of their journey, and thus actively “collaborate” (*Autonauts* 34) in the project, and consequently in the text. The novel is also a family project, since Stéphane Hébert, Carol’s son, contributed the drawings: “And so, although absent at the time, Stéphane Hébert is as much a presence here as Fafner [their VW van] or ourselves” (*Autonauts* 22). What is more, they promote their vehicle into the “third author” (*Autonauts* 46) in a fashion reminiscent of John Steinbeck’s treatment of his poodle in *Travels With Charlie*, or maybe only his camper truck Rocinante. Even the role of elaborate titles for each of the chapters can be seen as an invitation to the reader to actively participate in the invention of each leg of the journey, since those outline and summate each chapter functioning as previews of a sort. Finally, the apparent factuality of their travelogue is undermined by the fictional “Letters from a Mother” (68) that periodically present an outsider’s perspective on Cortázar and Dunlop’s modern Odyssey. There is also a pair of, again fictional, witnesses to their journey in the form of Calac and Polanco, two (supposedly) Argentine busybodies who follow Cortázar and Dunlop, managing from time to time to catch up with them, completing an impressive cast of a supposedly lonely thirty-day drive.

However, all this (potential) company only emphasizes the level of intimacy that exists between Cortázar and Dunlop, the level of intimacy that somehow makes the metaphor of marriage inadequate or redundant. After all, it is rather apparent that they are each other’s main subjects of observation and “scientific” investigation: Cortázar describes in minute detail Dunlop’s sleeping habits (“Sleeping Osita” 326-328), and Dunlop compiles “The Pocket Guide to Lobos” (330-333) in which she lists Cortázar’s main idiosyncrasies. As a result, the trip is, first and foremost, an “advance in happiness
and love” (351) – from the scientific, or strictly utilitarian point of view, their expedition is a celebration of self-indulgence, but, on the other hand, the consequences of their journey are much more profound than the consequences of a mere game, as Cortázar and Dunlop reveal: “We had found ourselves and that was our Grail on earth” (352). Most critics realize correctly that Autonauts of the Cosmoroute is “more… a love story than an explorer narrative” (Agresta), or “a genuine love story” (Lytal), rather than a “self-indulgent, amateurish log” (Kirby). And if ‘real’ life had not interfered6, this would have been one of the rare love stories with a happy ending, proving that the purpose of collaboration is to challenge and bend the norm.

Above all, in Autonauts of the Cosmoroute, Cortázar and Dunlop supply evidence for Martin Buber’s hypothesis: “The two who are loyal to the Eros of dialogue, who love one another, receive the common event from the other’s side as well, that is, they receive it from the two sides, and thus for the first time understand in a bodily way what an event is” (Between Man and Man 34). In the case of Autonauts, Cortázar and Dunlop are their own “common event,” which might suggest why the novel appears to be just a little bit “self-indulgent,” or possibly even extremely self-sufficient if compared to conventional descriptions of marriage. But what is particularly interesting about Cortázar and Dunlop is that the goal of their “dialogue-made-journey” (Autonauts 194) is not to merge into one entity. Occasionally they will refer to their “double heart” (Autonauts 108) to indicate the level of connectedness, though the prevailing sense of solitude they share, the sense of solitude that joins them and separates them from the rest of the world is simply too profound to be described as marriage.

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6 Dunlop died only five months after the completion of the journey, and some months before the book was published, and Cortázar died a year later with Autonauts being the last work he saw to publication as well.
CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it could be said that overt literary collaboration can be compared to a marriage, but only if the resulting comparison is meant to classify collaboration as a minor, limited type of authorship, since marriage implies a set of rules and regulations that apply to married individuals along with all those applying to single, or non-married individuals. It would certainly be an overstatement to claim that through their shared literary work collaborative couples (or teams) seek to intentionally transform or deconstruct the institution of marriage, but if the two (literary collaboration and marriage) are placed in the same context the marriage gets irretrievably redefined since sharing both the creative practice and marriage (as opposed to only sharing a marriage) demands a greater degree of commitment and intimacy. Consequently, any established norms get at least reversed, as in the example of Dorris and Erdrich, but more often they are rendered obsolete and even laughable, as in the cases of Redgrove and Shuttle and Cortázar and Dunlop.

In other words, to refer to every collaboration, and even to refer to every collaboration by a married couple as a marriage would be the same as referring to every writer, regardless of whether she or he writes in company or alone, as a wife or a husband. The complex and not always positive processes that either govern marriage or occur within it are not so well suited for descriptions of collaborative authorship, regardless of some immediately obvious similarities between the two, which leads to the conclusion that literary collaboration should be defined on its own terms, free of the ideological baggage that comes with certain metaphors, such as the metaphor of
marriage. Better yet, literary collaboration deserves an entirely new set vocabulary that should not entirely replace the metaphors of intimate relationships, but place them in a wider, less restricted context. This becomes especially apparent when the attention is switched away from arguably clear-cut cases of collaboration between only two writing partners to examples of overt collaboration between numerous participants. The following chapter will show that metaphors of intimacy are practically inapplicable to literary projects that involve writers who ‘meet’ only in the text on which they collaborate, or in circumstances that allow only textual or professional, and not intimate or conjugal closeness.
The Role of Singular Authorship in Openly Collaborative Writing

Although they are often treated as synonymous, the concepts of literary writing and literary authorship are to a certain degree distinct, with one (writing) supposedly falling under the domain of the other (authorship). This chapter, however, rather than only dealing with one or the other, will explore the relationship between the two that may serve as a clue towards better understanding of the notion of authorship in its broadest, and collaborative form. When operating with the idea of authorship as a singular endeavor, this relationship is seemingly simple: one person does the writing and consequently (that same) one person is considered to be the author of any text(s) resulting from the writing. In this context, a person is a writer while performing acts of writing the product of which will eventually become incorporated into the published text, but is named as the author only once the text enters the process of publication, whether it be in a commercial sense (as in having a book published, distributed, and sold) or in the sense of presenting the text to its intended public, after which that person is both the writer and the author. Here, it is necessary to emphasize that the ways in which one role is imagined and presented greatly influences the ways in which the other is perceived, and vice versa: writers approach the labor of writing with an image of authorship already in mind, most often the examples of ‘writership’ available to them are also examples of authorship (they look up to the published writers, i.e. those writers who are also authors); while the audience, the public (basically all those who did not participate in the original composition of a particular text) most of the time encounters every writer at the point when s/he can already be considered an author, which means that the public tends not to make any difference between the two roles perceiving writing as ‘authoring.’
Consequently, taking into account that the idea of the singular or solitary author is largely the dominant one, the traditional singularity of authorship is transferred onto the activity of writing, by those who practice it, but also by the public, which could account for the fact that overtly collaborative texts of any artistic ambition (texts written in overt collaboration resulting in nominally plural, rather than singular authorship) are often ignored by the public.

Collaboration complicates the writer/author relationship in the sense that it is unclear how many persons perform the writing and how many take the credit for that writing. Yet one of the interesting aspects of most collaborations, overt ones as well as those that end up presented as works of nominally singular authorship, is that a number of individuals join forces in literary labor, believing, almost exclusively, that the majority of that labor, that majority which falls under the category of writing, is supposed to be performed by solitary individuals in the least possible contact with others, especially other writers. In other words, in a collaboration, individuals participate in a plural type of authorship, while at the same time subscribing to a notion of writing as a solitary activity, influenced by the dominant perception of writing (and authorship). Consequently, the goal of this chapter is to determine what role (and to what result) does the notion of solitary authorship, and the corresponding notion of writing as a solitary activity play in examples of openly collaborative authorship (and the writing that is performed as a part of that openly collaborative authorship).

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1 Things are considerably different with collaborative texts in the area of, for example, science, or biography, or with texts labeled as ‘non-fiction’ (as broad as that category may be), where the person of the author is somewhat secondary to the topic of the text—which suggests that when it comes to literary art the person of the author, or at least the idea of the author as an individual, plays as important role as the text itself.
The key difference between the main examples observe in this chapter—the collaboration between Michael Dorris and Louise Erdrich, the mass literary project *Invisible Seattle*, and the group authorship of *The Caverns*—lies in the number of their respective participants, all of whom have (in each of the three cases) imagined literary writing in its conventional (solitary) form, yet have opted to make it a part of a rather unorthodox plural type of authorship—which constitutes a significant and rather telling paradox, telling in the sense that it deepens the understanding of literary authorship in general. Specifically, as these examples of overt collaboration show, authorship is organized in respect to the notion of solitary or singular authorship. In a way, all authorship is negotiated, agreed upon, determined, premeditated—it is never ‘natural’ nor does it appear automatically, it only appears that way in cases where the (primary) writer ‘automatically’ earns the title of the author, but it is always a subject of at least some degree of negotiation. Overt collaborations make this particularly apparent since they involve more than one writer, but also because of the fact that in those cases authorship never ceases to be questioned by publishers, critics, or the audience. All examples that are dealt with here, from a seemingly straightforward collaborative couple, to (arguably) an entire city, and back to a slightly more manageable group, bear marks of the influence the very idea of nominally singular authorship has on the process of literary writing, but also illustrate the role that the idea of writing as a solitary activity has on the notion of authorship as a solitary accomplishment.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF WRITING AND AUTHORSHIP

Of all activities that would even remotely fall under the domain of literary authorship or, more precisely, of all activities that for their total result have an identifiable and
seemingly complete, published text, the activity of writing is most readily singled out as the key literary practice—to the extent that the terms ‘author’ and ‘writer’ are, especially in the context of literature as art, virtually synonymous, especially if a very broad definition of writing and a very narrow definition of authorship are compared. Of the two terms, ‘writer’ is only seemingly less complicated: in its broadest meaning it can refer to any person performing even the most superficial act of writing for any given purpose; alternatively it can refer to a writer as a literary artist, or simply a person who writes with an idea of a larger audience in mind, whose writing is to be made public, a person for whom writing is the major aspect of his or her profession or calling. In this latter case (of a writer as an artist, or a professional), authorship seems to be the result of making a particular text public. Of course, a writer and (consequently) an author of a published memoir, may not have been a writer to begin with, certainly not in the sense of writing as a profession or writing as an artistic calling. On the other hand, there are instances of ghostwriting, where the writer is, by definition, not the author; though even then, (if not made aware of the ghostwriting partner) the audience will habitually imagine anyone (mis)identified as the author to be engaged in the activity of writing. At the same time, the activity of writing is mostly perceived as a solitary one, particularly in the context of artistic creativity—indeed, if seen as synonymous with authoring, this would account for authorship traditionally being envisioned as the province of the lone individual. On the other hand, most writers engage in the activity of writing with a view of (singular) authorship as their ultimate goal, which could be the reason why writing is practiced in solitude. What is more, they, even when engaged in collaborative ventures, follow certain (again singular) models, as in the case of Dorris and Erdrich who looked up to Gabriel
García Márquez, or Toni Morrison, or John Updike, but, for better or for worse, these are most often not the models of writers, but the *models of authors*, since most literary models become (widely) visible when they are no longer (only) writers, but when they are already authors (as well). Here it is useful note that the label of ‘author’ is practically impossible to erase, one can never fully revert to being only a writer, mainly because it is the result of the attention a particular text receives from the audience (general, critical, scholarly), and is reestablished every time that text appears in public discourse.

Hence, the first order of business should be to create as clear as possible distinction between the terms ‘writer’ and ‘author’—not an easy task since many authors (or, should we say, writers) use the terms synonymously, and many of them, although they are spoken of as authors, speak of themselves as writers. Here it almost seems that being (labeled as) a writer is more a matter of self-determination, while a person becomes an author only when s/he is recognized as one by others—not by a consensus, but by mere critical attention. To establish some sort of a starting point, it suffices to turn back to Johnson’s *Dictionary*, in which ‘author’ is defined as “he to whom anything owes its original… he that effects or produces any thing… the first writer of any thing; distinct from the translator or compiler… [and] a writer in general.” On the other hand, in Ash’s *The New and Complete Dictionary of English Language*, to write is “to produce as an author… [t]o perform the act of writing, to play the author, to tell in books,” a writer is “[o]ne that writes; an author,” and an author is “[t]he first mover of any thing, the inventor… the first writer of any thing, a writer.” This leads to a number of conclusions: first, if the stage of invention is indeed the one that determines authorship (as is also argued by Karen Burke LeFevre in her highly influential study *Invention as a Social Act*),
then one is an author even before one is a writer; and secondly, if there are, as, for example, Jack Stillinger suggests, multiple writers involved in the composition of a particular text, only the first one, or the primary writer should hope to be designated as the text’s author as well.

At this point, however, it is necessary to turn to *The OED*, in hope of some further explanation. There, writing is, among other things, defined as “[t]he action of composing and committing to *manuscript* [our emphasis]; expression of thoughts or ideas in written words; literary composition or production,” and as such would correspond only to the narrowest list of activities that fall under the category of authoring. However, again according to *The OED*, a writer is the “[o]ne who writes, compiles, or produces a literary composition; the composer of a book or treatise; a literary man or *author* [our emphasis],” and to write is “[t]o compose and set down on paper (a literary composition, narrative, verse, etc.); to put into or produce in literary form, to bring out (a book or literary work) *as an author* [again, our emphasis]…” This points back to the beginning, offering very little clarification, especially considering that, again according to *The OED*, an author is “[t]he person who originates or gives existence to anything,” as well as “[h]e who authorizes or instigates; the prompter or mover,” but also “[o]ne who sets forth written statements; the composer or writer of a treatise or book.” If anything, the suggestion is, on one hand, that ‘author’ and ‘writer’ are in some measure mutually definable terms, especially when it comes to the issue of literary authorship, or literature as art; and on the other, that the activity of writing is essential in imagining and constituting authorship. However, this may be true only if the writer is also the primary

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2 “… for many works, when the circumstances of composition are investigated in detail, the identifiable authorship turns out to be a plurality of authors” (Stillinger 22).
or major writer of a particular text, as well as if the stage of invention is seen as the most important stage of literary composition.

In providing collaboration-oriented definitions of the terms in question, two pivotal points or, more precisely, processes must be considered: the composition of a text and the publication of a text. In this context, a writer is a person who participates in the process of composition. This process is not as exclusive as the descriptions of the activity of writing may suggest, hence, there is often a person who is the primary writer, even in cases of declarative (Dorris and Erdrich) or nominal collaboration (*The Caverns*)—a person who does most of the work in that process of composition of a text. The nominations for actual authorships are, however, considered in the process of publication—habitually, the writer, or the primary writer, is the most immediate choice, but examples of disputed authorship from Shakespeare and Coleridge, to T. S. Elliot and Jack London, and on to Alex Haley, or more recently Stephen Ambrose and Kaavya Viswanathan are a clear indication that authorship (even nominal authorship) is never fully settled upon but that it remains open to further consideration and further participation.

On the other hand, the paradigm according to which ‘writership’ leads directly to authorship is plausible only if one disregards instances where a celebrity, someone like Babe Ruth or John F. Kennedy, hires a writing professional to pen his or her memoirs, or even when platoons of writers perform the activity of writing that will serve to promote the (singular) authorship of George Lucas, Tom Clancy, Robert Ludlum or brand-names, such as *Nancy Drew*, or *The Hardy Boys*. In those cases, individual (secondary) writers relinquish their claims of authorship in exchange for more or less adequate remuneration;
apparently they sell the very possibility of being the authors of the text they have written. In other words, they remain only writers, despite the fact that they perform the majority of writing, despite the fact that they are the actual primary writers, and even despite the fact that the very ideas for the texts they write may not have come from the designated author, but rather from an ambitious publisher or editor.

However, even if operating with idealized notions of writing and authoring, and setting aside for the moment confusing phenomena such as ghostwriting, there still needs to exist some line between the two. In, for example, Kant’s definition of the author, “speak[ing] to the public in [one’s] own name” or “speak[ing] publicly through the publisher” were the exact marks of the author (Kant 71-72)—which emphasizes the author’s relationship to the public, rather than his/her relationship to the text. Jerome McGann is even more direct in claiming that, “[a]s soon as a person begins writing for publication, he or she becomes an author, and this means—by (historical) definition—to have entered the world of all those who belong to the literary institution” (McGann 53). In other words, one becomes (or is transformed into) an author in the process of publication—the process in which a text is presented to the public, moving beyond the more or less private process of writing. Relying on the process of publication (or its results) as a point at which a writer (or the primary writer) turns into the author is useful in that it provides us with a more or less exact moment at which the ‘transformation’ occurs. Arguably, a text is published when it reaches its intended audience—but this audience is not determined merely by the writer. In fact, those who determine an audience for a particular text also participate in its authorship, since a text is fully realized
only when interacted with all who can (or should) interact with it.\(^3\) What is more, any initial audience (whether it be an editor considering a submitted manuscript, a critic reviewing an advance copy of a book, or simply a person who read a book and then recommended it to another) determines a particular text’s future (or potential) audience—more or less directly. Hence, the audience can be defined as all those who are not supposed to do any writing, but that would not be entirely true. Editors regularly contribute at least fragments of writing to texts for which they are responsible. Of course, they could be seen as ‘secondary’ writers, but even in cases of instant publication made possible by the Internet, where the written text almost automatically becomes the published text without any interference of publishers or editors, the actual audience builds itself actively by posting comments or links to the text, builds itself by writing, but also, turning to George Landow’s notion of hypertext\(^4\), builds the text itself. Therefore, publication is the very point at which individuals other than the primary writer\(^5\) come in to do their part in what we recognize as literary authorship, i.e. authorship that relies on multiple participants establishing relationships by way of text.

However, considering and describing in detail all the categories of participants in this broadly-imagined authorship would irretrievably disperse the originally proposed argument. Hence, it will have to suffice to resort to Robert Darnton’s concept of… … communications circuit that runs from the author to the publisher (if the bookseller does not assume that role), the printer, the shipper, the bookseller, and the reader. The reader completes the circuit, because he

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\(^3\) Again, authorship appears to be somewhat of a paradox, since it is impossible to discuss it before it is manifested, but by discussing it we are actually broadening it, continuing it—in this sense, authorship is never done, never finished.

\(^4\) “… hypertext is… composed of bodies of linked texts that have no primary axis of organization” (Landow 56).

\(^5\) Publishers, editors, proofreaders, designers, typesetters, printers…
influences the author both before and after the act of composition. Authors are readers themselves. By reading and associating with other readers and writers, they form notions of genre and style and a general sense of the literary enterprise, which affects their texts… A writer may respond in his writing to criticism of his previous work or anticipate reactions that his text will elicit. He addresses implicit readers and hears from explicit reviewers. So the circuit runs full cycle. It transmits messages, transforming them en route, as they pass from thought to writing to printed characters and back to thought again.

(Darnton 67)

Here, of course, Darnton employs the pre-digital division of literary labor, but his circuit more or less accounts for every type of interaction with the text regardless of the medium in which it appears. Relationships that Darnton describes in this circuit are what constitutes the collaborativeness of authorship as defined in this dissertation. Most importantly, Darnton presents this circuit as a continuous loop in which the texts (“messages”) are continuously transformed, interacted with and influenced by multiple participants (“the author… the publisher… the bookseller…, the printer, the shipper, the bookseller, and the reader… writers… [and] reviewers”). Finally, here, in the space of a half a paragraph, Darnton himself treats the terms ‘author’ and ‘writer’ as synonymous, potentially due to the fact that in his circuit the roles that individual participants assume also “transform” and change in respect to the participation of other.

Darnton’s model aside, nominally singular authorship is still the prevailing convention, with overtly (or nominally) collaborative authorship being somewhat of an aberration, hence, for all practical purposes, the author or authors are only those persons literally named as such—in the three main examples here those are the persons who are at the same time primary or major writers of texts of which they are found to be authors.
And if indeed publication is seen as that point where a writer becomes an author (regardless of whether they are one and the same person), a writer has more control over the text itself, whereas an author has mostly control (or at least more possibility for some sort of control) over its reception. To differentiate the writerly type of control from the authorial, it suffices to turn to the example of Henry James, whose writerly control affected his actual text, but who engaged in the wider type of control (or interaction) with his texts in his notable prefaces to the *New York Edition* of his work. On a much smaller scale, every reader has a degree of control over a particular text in the sense that s/he can influence, favorably or not, on how that text is perceived by those with whom s/he discusses it. To return to the writer/author dichotomy in terms of nominally singular authorship, the author exists (as the inventor, or originator) both before and after the writer, whereas the writer exists during the very process of writing and up to the moment when the text gets published. Thus, the domain of the author is possibly all-encompassing, but also diffused, whereas the domain of the writer is more concrete, but also much narrower.

This possibly explains why for Raymond Williams, “[t]he word ‘author’… carries a sense of decisive origination, rather than simply, as in ‘writer’ or in the more specific terms, a description of an activity” (Williams 192). Consequently, the author’s responsibility is much wider than that of the writer. In fact, when Wayne Booth compares these two types of responsibility, he finds that “[t]he writer’s responsibility to the work’ can… be translated as ‘the writer’s responsibility to the implied author’” (Booth 128). This
would mean that the (role of the) writer is in a way subordinated to the (role of the) author. In cases where the two are one and the same person this would not be a problem, and in cases of, again, ghostwriting writers are compensated for their subordination. It is only in instances where collaborativeness of either writing or authorship is accentuated that the subordination of writing to authoring can prove problematic—more specifically, in cases when collaborative writing attempts to assume appearance of singular authorship. Of course, for Booth, of the two (writer and author) only one, the writer, is an actual person, and the author, “implied” and therefore imagined, rather resembles Foucaultian author-function, a symbolic construct. Surely, if only imagined, the author possesses no real agency, but considering that this function or role is assumed or supported (or imagined) by multiple individuals (only some of whom are writers) there is considerable agency exercised, if not by the author (“implied” one), then in the (singular) name of the author. Accordingly, this is an indication that one writes with an idea of authorship already in mind, or more precisely, that the idea of writing as an utterly solitary activity is a direct result of authorship being perceived as a solitary accomplishment, a fact that is particularly obvious in cases where the work of a number of writers (primary or secondary) is presented under a singular byline, whether it be a name of an editor, or the chief writer (as is often the case in more openly collaborative ventures), a singular pseudonym, or a name of a higher authority, or bigger celebrity (ghostwritten novels or memoirs).

Interestingly, in his discussion, Booth operates with two meanings of the term ‘author’: in one of these ‘author’ is indeed implied, “the relatively coherent authors [the writers’] works imply” (128); but in the other ‘author’ is undoubtedly an actual person, with (among other things) a “duty to build a career” (129).
CONVENTIONAL IMAGES OF WRITING AND AUTHORSHIP

In at least a dozen writer’s guides an aspiring writer will find the dogma of writerly solitude voiced by, depending on the source, either Jessamyn West or Lawrence Clark Powell:

“Writing is a solitary occupation. Family, friends, and society are the natural enemies of the writer. He must be alone, uninterrupted, and slightly savage if he is to sustain and complete an undertaking” (Gabay 294, Poynter & Bingham 112). Anna Strunsky, who shared with Jack London the authorship of *The Kempton-Wace Letters*, was to such an extent susceptible to the myth of solitary genius that she repeatedly sought refuge in this type of hermitage, which eventually more hindered than fostered her creativity:

> My father could not understand why I should leave a comfortable home to live quite by myself in this way, far from friends and family, to whom I was devoted. He was perhaps right, I achieved very little in these long pilgrimages and suffered from loneliness. It was not natural for a young girl to live alone. But I wanted to feel that I could. Do one hard thing a day to stiffen your fiber.

(Strunsky qtd. in Boylan 38)

For Strunsky, solitude seems to have been a sort of sacrifice; she was not necessarily treating her family and friends as “enemies” but was making an offering that would somehow ensure the quality of her writing, a self-inflicted hardship that ultimately served as a writing constraint. However, for most writers, the reason why they write alone is a bit more prosaic: they write alone because their literary role models wrote alone. As Harold Love concludes:

> Much consideration of authorial work still takes as its model the single author creating a text in solitariness—Proust’s cork-lined room,
Dickens’s prefabricated Swiss chalet, Mary Ward’s elegant study at ‘Stocks’. In doing so it restricts itself not just to a particular kind of authorship but a particular phase of that kind of authorship. It omits, for a start, all that precedes the act of writing (language acquisition, education, experiences, conversation, reading of other authors); likewise everything that follows the phase of initial inscription while the work is wetted by friends and advisors, receives second thoughts and improvements, is edited for the press, if that is its destination, and given the material form in which it will encounter its readers.

(Love 33)

In other words, fixation on the act of writing—defined in the most narrow terms as an actual creation of a literary manuscript—clouds the view of all the collaborative aspects of writing and authorship, and is in that sense more limiting than liberating—imagining writing as the stereotypical solitary activity reduces, rather than multiplies creative possibilities. The demand for solitude is a consequence of the antiquated notion that literary creation, or more precisely writing, is an act of self-expression—the writer defines who this self is by seeking solitary confinement, as if his or her self becomes less singular, less articulate when others are around. For the simple reason of being kept secret, more private than merely private, and more intimate than merely intimate, an act of writing is shrouded in mystery, performed by a single writer hiding away, as we will show, even from his closest intimate or creative partner(s). Among rituals constructed around the practice of writing there are those such as writer Anne Fadiman’s “Hong Kong Time,” a switch to night-time activity in order to escape the distractions of non-writerly life, stemming from an exaggerated assumption that two writers would create an impossible atmosphere for each other: “[t]he one-writer-per-household myth” (Salwak 67, 68). As it turns out, such odd practices, similar to those of Proust or Carlyle (Salwak
71), regularly attract more attention than the less flamboyant description of the writing process, only contributing to the misconceptions surrounding the practice of writing. In fact, they can be seen as at least partly responsible for what Flannery O’Connor recognizes as “the myth of the ‘lonely writer,’” the myth that writing is a lonely occupation,” one that she labels as “particularly pernicious and untruthful” (Glyer ix), for the very reason we already suggested—that it potentially hinders creativity, or at least hinders the perception of collaborative, plural creativity.

MICHAEL DORRIS AND LOUISE ERDRICH—IDENTIFYING THE (PRIMARY) WRITER = IDENTIFYING THE AUTHOR

Probably one of the most widely promoted, and consequently one of the most notorious literary couples, Michael Dorris and Louise Erdrich built their literary fame and fortune on ‘complicating’ the nominal as well as declarative authorship of their novels by wrapping up singular, separate acts of writing into a blatantly collaborative process: according to their own testimony, each of them has performed the role of a writer, the primary writer, the author, a co-author, and a collaborator, while sharing three literary careers (his, her, and theirs). As Holly Laird puts it, in almost fifteen years, framed by the beginning and the end of their marriage, “Dorris and Erdrich experienced fiction writing as taking over from, superseding, and transforming their individual acts of authorship into an inseparably intertwined and merged coauthorship” (236). Or, more precisely, the two practiced literary collaboration without abandoning the comforts, or merely the rutted path of the tradition. “We’re collaborators, but we’re also individual writers,” explained Erdrich (Chavkin & Chavkin 103). Thus, in regards to the process of writing, the authorship of Dorris and Erdrich is at turns collaborative and singular: joint invention
precedes individual production (indicating that their authorship is indeed plural), but their writing is strictly separated and, although followed by shared revision, under a strong influence of the traditional, solitary concept of authorship. In describing it, Linda Karell tends to accentuate the unwritten part of the process:

The authorial process begins well before pen is put to paper… relational interaction and the pleasure of speaking with each other are equally a component of authorship, an understanding of authorship that undermines the explicit privilege accorded [to] written language and an individual writer’s implied ownership of it.

(Karell 33-34)

Here Karell, same as Laird above, conflates writing with authoring, observing writing as a part of the “authorial process.” In this she, it would seem, subscribes to the notion of author as the originator, inventor, conceiver: if Dorris and Erdrich share the act of invention, all their consequent activity is then continuation of that initial collaboration. Even according to Dorris and Erdrich, theirs is “a conversational process,” or as one of the interviewers puts it “the sort of iterative process that used to be the norm back in those primitive publishing-industry days when editors actually edited rather than merely ‘acquired’” (Chavkin & Chavkin 65-57). In this, the process of Dorris and Erdrich somewhat resembles the collaborative practice of, for example, Christopher Isherwood and Don Bachardy with the act of writing preceded by a phase of shared invention through a direct dialogue. As for the act of writing, Bachardy was content with the role of “a typist,” a “secondary” role, although, as James J. Berg suggests, he might have downplayed his literary ability in order to reinforce his identity as “a visual artist” (Salwak 125). Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford also emphasized the role of
conversation in their collaborative endeavors, where the latter (assuming again a subordinate, secondary role) almost milked the former for anecdotes and retellings of events in order to inspire the old sailor, as well as to produce volumes of Conrad’s memoirs, *The Mirror of the Sea* and *A Personal Record*, which according to Nicholas Delbanco, are almost “monologues, with the dialogue excised” (Delbanco 34, 98-100). And this is exactly where collaboration ceases to exist, or at least ceases to be visible as authorship—the primary writer ends up being the author, while the secondary writer is relegated to the role of a silent partner.

If, for a moment, it is taken for granted that the type of writing process determines the type of authorship, the conclusion could be that the shared process of writing, Dorris and Erdrich’s “conversational process,” would result in openly, indeed nominally collaborative authorship. After all, as Edith Somerville explained about her literary partnership with Violet Martin: “The question… as to which of us held the pen… during our many years of collaboration… was a point that never entered our minds to consider… I may say that our work was done conversationally” (Somerville qtd. in Cronin 20). In other words, for them, the act of writing was of little consequence: though probably each of them has committed at least some individual acts of writing separate from the other; since the two were cousins and not twins joined at the hip, the overall process was collaborative.

However, Dorris and Erdrich have developed “a complex process” in which dialogue between them both precedes and follows individual, solitary acts of writing, but with the nominal authorship assigned to “the one who’s done most of the primary writing” (Chavkin & Chavkin ix). The primary writer thus became the only author: this was the case with a half a dozen books published under Dorris’ name, and almost as
many published under Erdrich’s name. The idea for each particular text has been a product of conversation, though Dorris and Erdrich seem to have kept a close tab of exactly whose idea it was initially. After the plot and the characters have been thoroughly discussed, that original idea-bearer performed the initial act of writing: “It might be a paragraph; it might be ten pages; it might be something in between” (Chavkin & Chavkin 35). Consequently, it was this single (and solitary) act of writing that determined the authorship of the entire text, regardless of how disproportionately small it might have been compared to all the work that was performed in collaboration. From this point on, the roles are strictly divided: the writer writes, and the critic critiques—the acts of writing remain solitary and the verbal dialogue that connects those acts is the predominant locus of collaboration. “The final say clearly rests with the person who wrote the piece initially, but we virtually reach consensus on all words before they go out, on a word by word basis,” claims Dorris (Chavkin & Chavkin 35). This at the same time divided and shared type of authorship is therefore very much influenced by the idea that an act of writing is an act of authoring as well, as well as the notion that solitary authorship is a more acceptable mode of authorship.

For this reason, in cases of openly collaborative authorship, the acts of writing are often performed in solitude, with literary partners writing alone and separate from each other. “This is the way we do it,” Nikoo and Jim McGoldrick describe their writerly relationship, “Each of us is working at opposite ends of the house on a different scene. After six grueling hours (well, maybe after an hour), we swap computers” (McGoldrick & McGoldrick 39), and it is a description that strangely echoes the one provided by Dorris and Erdrich. Even when they were working on *The Crown of Columbus*, their only
co-signed novel, Dorris and Erdrich were careful to divide their individual acts of writing: “We don’t write in the same room or with one desk or with hooked-up computers. No, we do go off our own ways, so we wrote things separately” (Chavkin & Chavkin 170). As a result, the emphasis they placed on the solitary act of writing undermined their collaboration, turning it into a sort of publicity attraction, since their claims of sharing the work that appeared under only his or her names served primarily to generate critical attention, and did very little to promote (overt) collaborative writing.

Similarly, Ascher/Straus (Sheila Ascher and Dennis Straus) are another collaborative couple who consider themselves “a true collective: developing as writers in extremely close communication (though never, for example, working in the same room)” (Straus 5). This, of course, constitutes a paradox only if authorship is to fully reflect the conditions of writing, if writing in solitude must result in nominally singular authorship. For Ascher/Straus, there seems to be no paradox present: “We don’t write together in the literal sense, but do in every other sense. We edit each other’s writing (allow no other editing) and we publish jointly without saying who initiated what. To distinguish ‘who wrote what’ is to bow to someone else’s idea of authorship, no more acceptable than bowing to a narrow idea of what fiction can be” (http://ascher-sraus.com/index.htm). Here Ascher/Straus operate with two notions of writing: the first one (“in every other sense”) apparently leaves plenty of room for collaboration, while the second one is emphatically solitary, and the reason for this is because their models are singular authors, and not necessarily singular writers, or more precisely, because their models are writers whom they have come to know only as (singular) authors. As for Dorris and Erdrich, they indeed “bowed” to the traditional idea of authorship as the domain of the individual, they
subscribed to the hierarchy of acts of writing, where true writing consequently equaled true authorship only if it involved committing fragments of text to a blank page. Unlike Ascher/Straus, they considered all other acts of writing, such as revising a preexisting piece of text, secondary, and therefore not authorial—which explains why most of their declaratively joint work appeared under only one of their names. Still, similar to Ascher/Straus, Dorris and Erdrich found that sharing an act of writing would be impossible, not just for them, but for anyone else, accepting fully the dogma of singular authorship, as expressed here by Erdrich:

> The heart of our collaboration is a commitment to one another’s separateness. I certainly respect the solitude and silence it takes for Michael’s work and he does the same for me. The idea of linking brains or even working in the same space—I find that impossible. As would anyone. (Chavkin & Chavkin 226)

Here, however, unlike in the case of Ascher/Straus, lies a paradox, since Dorris and Erdrich admitted full or nominal collaboration of only one of their novels, *The Crown of Columbus*, and in all other cases seemed to have taken advantage of singular authorship as the rule of the trade.

When describing their separate, solitary acts of writing, Dorris and Erdrich exhibit to what extent they remained imbued with the myth of the solitary genius, the same that Flannery O’Connor found to be “particularly pernicious and untruthful” (Glyer ix), or the necessity for solitude in order to be fully creative. At one point Erdrich “barricaded herself… behind closed doors,” while on another occasion she emphasized that the proprietary relationship of a writer to his or her text comes before any notion of collaboration: “Michael writes down on *his* page, or I write down on *my* page. I go and
work in *my* room, and… Michael goes and works on *his* computer [emphasis added]” (Chavkin & Chavkin x, 28). The separation of acts of writing seems to be the norm even for collaborative couples, as noted by Dale Salwak, “[s]olitude [often wins] out over company” (Salwak x). Writing, ideally imagined, is supposed to establish a direct line between the mind of the writer and the text—a line that cannot be broken even if, for example, stenographers are inserted in it. Yet the very insistence on writerly solitude indicates that the act of writing can be very easily intruded upon by hosts of trespassers who thus become more or less willing, more or less welcome collaborators. The physical separation of the sites (and sights) of writing is intentionally drastic, as in the case of Ann and Anthony Thwaite who “saved [themselves] from the temptation of interrupting each other by the long walk” between their studies (Salwak 15, 16), which might suggest that the presence of the other may stop any writing, but nevertheless leaves enough room to speculate whether the presence of the other would affect the writing in any creative, productive manner.

At the very beginning of their careers, as well as their relationship, Dorris and Erdrich exercised a fuller type of collaboration, writing “stories for popular consumption” as Milou North, a composite pseudonym cobbled up from their first names and their geographic location (Chavkin & Chavkin 29). They both later agreed that sharing the act of writing produces “less serious,” “not terribly deep” work, and was more appropriate for their “formative years” (Chavkin & Chavkin 29, 115). In this Dorris and Erdrich subscribed to the opinion of their interviewers, openly depreciating this mode of writing, and setting it clearly apart from ‘true’ writing that results in equally ‘true’ authorship: “People do it, of course, but their efforts are usually blatantly commercial and without literary pretensions”
(Chavkin & Chavkin 83). Ironically, Dorris and Erdrich will themselves come to bear the stigma of blatant commerciality with Holly Laird, among others, describing their writing relationship as “a mutually beneficial commercial partnership” (235), an apt description to a certain degree, but one also exhibiting the limited choice of models critics have at their disposal when discussing collaborative creativity.

Lack of suitable models for discussing collaboration mirrors the lack of suitable models to practice collaboration, and consequently results in a type of paradox when the work itself demands joint effort and the norms of proper authorship dictate utter singularity. Needless to say, whenever asked to list their literary influences Dorris and Erdrich do not mention any other writing pairs and do not hint that they are aware of any. All their role-models are singular authors: Erdrich’s favorites are “Flannery O’Connor, Gabriel García Márquez, Katherine Anne Porter, Toni Morrison, Willa Cather, Jane Austen, George Eliot, and William Faulkner,” and Dorris’ are “Toni Morrison… Tennessee Williams, Gloria Naylor, Albert Camus, Sinclair Lewis, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Paul Theroux, John Updike, and Barbara Pym” (Chavkin & Chavkin xvii). In fact, out of dozens, if not hundreds of writers mentioned or discussed by Dorris and Erdrich in all twenty three interviews collected by the Chavkins in Conversations With Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris, there is no reference to a collaboration other than their own, which is an unmistakable indication that Dorris and Erdrich shaped their working relationship according to the singular notion of authorship.

However, Dorris and Erdrich were repeatedly confronted with opinions such as that of Bill Moyers: “Two people cannot create a sentence because that’s a solitary act of struggling, creative soul. It’s impossible to merge those two, no matter how good the
marriage is” (Chavkin & Chavkin 140). On their part, they never offered an alternative view, nor did they contradict the impossibility of truly collaborative writing, as if in fear that any act of writing other than solitary would not be writing at all. Although they claim that “there’s so much more to it [presumably authorship] than sitting down and writing” (Chavkin & Chavkin 140), they nominally adhere to the singular definition of authorship, and effectively treat writing as authoring.

As a result, it is Dorris and Erdrich themselves that created the contradiction: shifting back and forth from joint invention, solitary writing acts, collaborative writing process, and nominally singular authorship. They tried to maintain an impression of consistency by insisting on their “individual relationship[s] with a page” (Chavkin & Chavkin 140), as well as by singularizing themselves: “Our job as a writer [our emphasis]” (Chavkin & Chavkin 139). This singularization is further enforced by their interviewers who apply the traditional rhetoric to this case of untraditional authorship: “Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris don’t get out much. They live deep in the New Hampshire countryside, in an old farmhouse in Cornish, where they have children to raise and books to write and not a lot of help from anybody [added emphasis]” (Chavkin & Chavkin 157). This description sounds a bit comical, especially considering they had a ‘whole lot of help’ from each other, and Dorris and Erdrich are ready to admit that neither of them would be that singular writer they are claiming to be without the other. “I would not be writing if I were not working with her,” claimed Dorris (Chavkin & Chavkin 109). He asserted: “I don’t think I’d be writing fiction. I would not have the courage” (Chavkin & Chavkin 120). Furthermore, he would be “a much more conservative writer” without Erdrich, since it was through their collaboration that he had
“gain[ed creative] freedom” (Chavkin & Chavkin 135). Similarly, Erdrich maintained, “neither of us would write what we do unless we were together” (Chavkin & Chavkin 103). This suggests that the author they are trying to be, each of them separately as well as jointly, would not exist without each of them.

This author, modeled according to principles of singular authorship is largely present in The Crown of Columbus as well, since this novel too was written in solitary, individual acts of writing, even though Dorris and Erdrich chose to publish it under both their names. Apparently, they still believed that, if it is to be widely acknowledged, a collaboration must at least appear as if it were produced by a single person. What is more, only those collaborations that create the impression of univocality are deemed successful, and those collaborators who tend to blend into singular composite entities are deemed worthy of literary authorship. In the case of Dorris and Erdrich, as their ‘separate relevancies’ grew, their critics found it necessary to promote the idea of “[a]… fusion, a merger of their styles and identities” (Chavkin & Chavkin 117), especially once their plans for The Crown of Columbus became public. In fact, although they still emphasized the individuality and separateness of their respective acts of writing, in order for The Crown of Columbus to be taken ‘seriously,’ they further developed the image of the two of them being a writer, a single author combined of the two of them as its halves: “As we’ve worked on more and more books together, it’s become harder to separate one or another’s contribution” (Chavkin & Chavkin 177). By the time the unprecedented advance payment for The Crown of Columbus became public ($1.5 million, half of it paid at once, based on a 5-page proposal), they were ready to admit that, as for example Dorris explained, “Louise could write in the voice of [Dorris’ characters] and they would sound
very much as they do when I write about them” (Chavkin & Chavkin 118). In other words, the singularity of the connection between the writer and the story that they earlier insisted upon was undermined, the story maintained its integrity but the writers as interpreters or media became mutually interchangeable, and the singularity of the act of writing was compromised since it was now possible for either of them to perform it.

Consequently, “Dorris and Erdrich embraced coauthorship less fully than a number of the other collaborations…” (Laird 225), and as a result have created a collaboration that reflects all the prejudices that plague the literary profession and the notion of authorship. As Karell explains, Dorris and Erdrich shared the traditional “convictions about the proper road to literary greatness” with “the contradictions of collaborative creativity… settled by recourse to traditional understanding of authorship” (34, 36). Therefore, their type of collaboration is not “breaking the laws of authorship” (Karell 36), but confirming them. But, as Laird points out, one of the most notable characteristics of Dorris and Erdrich’s collaboration was the fact that although they avoided a single label as either Native American or American, high-brow or low-brow, singular or collaborative authors, they took advantage of any label their critics came up with, not by challenging them but by conflating them into a multifaceted composite authorial identity (228-230). Surely, no writer or author is forced to subscribe to any particular notion of authorship, but the case of Dorris and Erdrich certainly should make one wonder why would anyone practice solitary writing, and yet declare to participate in a collaboration or, alternatively, why would anyone practice collaborative writing and yet formally conceal that fact by choosing a singular byline. In this respect, the critics seem to have reached a consensus finding that the relationship of Dorris and Erdrich remains
well within the norm. Specifically, the “contradictory duality” that Laird finds to be the key characteristic of their collaboration does not represent an entirely untraditional, alternative model of authorship since the two remained well within the dictate of the norm by rigidly subscribing to the singular act of writing. Or as Karell puts it, “Dorris and Erdrich do not necessarily write differently than other writers; they do, however, consciously rely upon and acknowledge an intrinsically collaborative writing process as few others do” (43). Since Dorris and Erdrich chose to keep their individual acts of writing private, out of even each other’s sight, and more private than other aspects of their writing careers and their married life, they, as Laird concludes, “continued to be seen and discussed as individual writers, solitary authors who [merely] helped each other more overtly and more routinely than others” (Laird 225). The very term ‘help’ employed by Laird would indicate that she considers collaboration to be the secondary, subordinate aspect of Dorris and Erdrich’s authorship, but she remains as ambiguous as the two have been, by claiming that “nearly every word they write is both the product of collaboration and not” (Laird 232). As a result, the conclusion is that in the case of Dorris and Erdrich, the model of solitary or singular authorship proved to be too powerful to fully ignore or to overcome. In fact, even though the pair repeatedly declared themselves as collaborators, as writers they continued to adhere to the more orthodox type of creativity, choosing (with only a few exceptions) the more pragmatic option of nominally singular authorship. What is more, they acknowledged rather than challenged the norm of singularity—even in *The Crown of Columbus*, relying on two more or less equal, or equally represented main characters, Dorris and Erdrich kept the idea of authorship altogether outside of their text, and even in their interviews collaboration was presented
as not much more than a frill on an otherwise solitary endeavor. The main reason for this could be detected in their adherence to roles: some of which were primary (“the one who’s done most of the primary writing”), but most of which were secondary, and as such could not support the weight of authorship that resulted from the publication of texts incorporating shared writing. In this respect, the next example, *Invisible Seattle*, a group novel, corresponds quite well to the relationship of Dorris and Erdrich, on one hand by presenting the discussion of authorship in the text itself (and offering an alternative to the ubiquitous singular author), but especially by exaggerating (and consequently relativizing and even satirizing) the strict division of literary labor between the more relevant and the less relevant roles.

**INVISIBLE SEATTLE—PLURALIZING THE ACT OF WRITING**

In the summer of 1983, the citizens of Seattle became subjects to a series of unusual literary ‘solicitations’: while they were out and about performing their everyday activities, a group of activists wearing white overalls and hardhats cajoled them into performing acts of writing. Conducting surveys, passing out leaflets, and writing down random conversations they overheard, these “literary workers” were hard at work constructing the “first novel written by an entire city!” (*Invisible Seattle*, bc) while at the same time trying to evade what they perceived as the menace of the Author. The main theme (deconstruction of authorship), as well as the basic plot (in the tradition of the detective genre) for *Invisible Seattle* were conceived by a group of literary enthusiasts (from here on they will be referred to as the Invisibles) who insisted on sharing the responsibility for both the invention and organization stages of composition. Along with
additional volunteers (“literary workers”), they canvassed the city of Seattle, gathering fragments of text by means of forms, questioners, and inadvertent ‘donations’ (some of them eavesdropped on passersby). Any text that was harvested in this fashion was further organized into a more or less coherent whole by groups of editors at a local arts festival, thus crowning a mass endeavor completely different from the traditionally conceived process of literary writing. Consequently, well before the Internet became the habitual media for organizing plural creativity, the instigators of this novel turned writing into not just a public display, but public action, and in the process organized a most impressive authorial body.

There are several aspects of *Invisible Seattle* that make it stand out among comparable examples of literary projects involving a large number of participants. Unlike, let us say, *A Million Penguins*, an attempt by Penguin Books and De Montfort University’s creative writing program to orchestrate a wiki-novel, *Invisible Seattle* relied mostly on unmediated contact between its ‘co-authors.’ It was notably *not* a publicity stunt devised to attract attention and direct it towards a brand name or a commercial project, and it succeeded in or at least came close to breaking the solitariness of the act of writing. As such, it is certainly one of the most successful, and one of the most prominent cases of pre-digital, mass authorship, that through its creators’ intentional reversal of authorial norms and mores highlights some important features of authorship in respect to the act and the process of writing. More importantly, the type of collaboration that yielded *Invisible Seattle* is almost diametrically opposite to the type of collaboration practiced by Dorris and Erdrich: while Dorris and Erdrich kept the act of writing hidden

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7 If anything, the novel is intentionally designed as a mock advertisement for the city itself, an invitation to Seattle no tourist board would endorse.
even from each other, the activists involved in the conception and realization of *Invisible Seattle* shared their acts of writing with any passer-by willing to spare a minute of his or her time. In this, the authors of *Invisible Seattle* achieved what Dorris and Erdrich considered unattainable: “The idea of linking brains or even working in the same space—I find that impossible. As would anyone” (Erdrich in Chavkin & Chavkin 226). If anything, this is the point of *Invisible Seattle*, to link brains, not in some transcendental fashion, but by means of language, and make people share the working space as well as the text. In terms of sheer numbers, the process that yielded *Invisible Seattle* involved around thirty literary workers and a good portion of almost twenty thousand visitors to the Bumbershoot Festival, not to speak of innumerable citizens of Seattle who contributed their fragments of text by filling out pre-made forms and answering questionnaires, or unwittingly lending fragments of their daily conversations to the novel (Wittig 65-68). As already noted, not all participants in this mass process of writing had the same status. Some, indeed only provided a word or two; and some were not even aware of their participation. The novel was conceived and orchestrated by a small group of literary activists, but a group nevertheless: there was no singular author or individual central authority in the role of the inventor, or instigator; there was no primary writer who performed the bulk of creative work. After all, the main goal of the project was to harness, or better yet, to render visible and document everyday public creativity, presenting it in a form recognizable to the literary audience.

To the Invisibles, the group of literary activists behind the venture, who are never individually identified by their names, this was a serious game for which they have scripted firm ground rules as well as the initial framework in terms of plot, main themes,
and key characters, committing to collaboration from the very first stage of the process of writing. This would account for the collaborative act (or acts) of invention, invention that was not shared by *all* the writers of *Invisible Seattle*—average contributors were mostly not in on the entire design of the novel, but this design was nevertheless shared, and as such a product of group effort. Hoping to avoid a potentially stifling effect of having so many constraints, the Invisibles were careful to build a “literary structure that does not dictate, but coordinates multiple creativity” (Wittig 66), or devise a format in which any person can participate, anticipating that the writerly interest or commitment may range from fleeting curiosity to full dedication to the project. The main rule however was to break the rule of solitary, private writing: “If it was supposed to be done alone, we’d do it together. If it was supposed to be private, we’d do it in public. We’d reverse the authority of writer and reader” (Wittig 66). Similarly to Dorris and Erdrich, the Invisibles appear to have been quite aware of the norm of the singular authorship, but rather than following it, they used it as a negative from which they developed their own particular model of authorship and writing. They came up with a number of devices by which they, in a manner of speaking, divided the act of writing in order to allow multiple participation. In this context, fragments of “overheard conversation,” for example, become pieces of text written by the unknowing (and unknown) person in the street and the literary worker who recorded them. Of course, this represents no revolutionary technique—there is probably no writer who was not at least tempted to use a line spoken by another person—but in the case of *Invisible Seattle* this practice is revealed as the sharing of language, the emphasis is on collaboration, and not as the right of a remarkable individual to appropriate anything that enters his or her perception. Consequently, the Invisibles were determined
to make each stage of writing, from prewriting to publishing, more apparent, or, better yet, to make a spectacle of each stage, inspiring their public and partners to search for a similar spectacle, or at least ‘collaborativeness,’ in even the most solitary act of writing. This revealing effect of collaboration is possible due to the fact that literary collaborators often attract more attention in regards to the logistics of their labor, the organization of their writing (or their respective egos) rather than the product of their efforts. When it comes to *Invisible Seattle*, it is certainly true that the labor itself, the material documenting the process of writing, is equally, if not more fascinating than the product or, more precisely, that the text received its cult status (at least among fans of experimental writing) because of the ways in which creative labor was organized.

It is immediately clear from *Invisible Seattle’s* press release that its engineers, the novel’s “literary workers,” have a radical notion of novel writing, one that puts an emphasis on human labor rather than divine inspiration. “Danger: Novel Under Construction,” they announce addressing the public in plural: “We write novels the way they used to build cathedrals”8 (*Invisible Seattle*, 1). In other words, they deal with a concept of mass authorship, while at the same time still struggling with the antiquated idea of a solitary creator: “Invisible Seattle is offering the people of Seattle the chance to become the author [our emphasis]” (*Invisible Seattle* 1). This invitation to participate in the (nominally singular?) authorship of the novel makes it apparent that the Invisibles operated with the concept of authorship according to which writing is authoring, with the two activities practically indistinguishable. Consequently, those citizens of Seattle who took the time to answer questioners and fill out forms, i.e. those who accepted the

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8 Here the irony of cathedral-building was fully intended, as another indication that the myth of solitary genius is, same as the edifices erected in its honor, collectively, and therefore collaboratively constructed.
invitation to commit the simplest acts of writing, automatically became ‘authors,’ credited not individually, but collectively, as Seattle, the city.

But one of the most important peculiarities of *Invisible Seattle* is the attempt of the novel’s organizers to break the solitude of the act of writing, solitude that seems to be the norm even in cases of literary partnership, as shown on the examples of Dorris and Erdrich, or Ascher/Straus. By conflating ‘writership’ (as an accepted, though not exclusive prerequisite for authorship) with authorship (as a ‘consequence’ of publishing the products of writing), the Invisibles have tried to undermine the solitary character of both: once they have tricked (literally) crowds of people into writing together, they have pronounced them authors as well. They were able to do this by imagining the collective author along with imagining the novel itself—unlike, for example, Dorris and Erdrich, who continued to imagine authorship as singular even while sharing the work of writing. Of course, not all of the novel’s text was written in company—the event at the Bumbershoot Festival featured writing booths designed to resemble telephone booths, and as such secure privacy for one person only. But a considerable part of the text was openly solicited and gathered from the public, in small fragments the writing of which was shared by literary workers and sympathetic citizens of Seattle.

To complicate things even further, along with writing a novel, the makers of *Invisible Seattle* were engaged in (re)writing the concept of the author as well, or as they proclaim, they were “attempting to create a new author: the collective imagination of a city” (*Invisible Seattle* 1). In practice, this involved erasing any distinction between writing and authoring. There was no ‘mastermind’ behind the project, no *one person* received credit for it. The fact that there was the core group of ‘designers’ or ‘instigators’ might
suggest that some participants in the project had more authority over the others, but it only emphasizes that *Invisible Seattle* was and is a group, and therefore collaborative endeavor—collaborative quality of any literary effort is not negated if some participants assume more responsibility than others; collaborativeness becomes apparent when the contributions of all participants is accounted for. However, creating multi-authored texts does not suggest anarchy, for the simple reason that every group of active writers is limited with some of its members being more active than the other. A case in point is *A Million Penguins*: a wiki-novel that started with a bare minimum of rules and structure eventually evolved to a (slightly) higher level of organization: surely, there arose the need for administrators to sanction open acts of vandalism, such as users deleting entire sections of text, but at the same time many users functioned as literary vigilantes, trying themselves, single-handedly, to impose some order on the textual mayhem of the burgeoning novel (Mason & Thomas 7-13). This suggests that any group of writers, no matter how large, with a more or less shared goal in mind, will seek a certain degree of textual order, with some members of the group assuming a greater portion of responsibility for maintaining that order. Traditionally, it is that type of responsibility that is most readily associated with literary authority, but it is reasonable to expect that, with the open collaboration practice more frequently and on a much wider level, that incoherence and the lack of textual unity, which critics found to be the greatest flaws of *A Million Penguins* (Vershbow, Roy, Mason & Thomas 15), become the most coveted feature of the novel, once the expectation of single person authorship is extinguished.

*Invisible Seattle* is certainly a significant step in that direction, though it is far from incoherent. After all, this novel was produced and, to an extent, orchestrated in the
manner that resembles the performances of symphonies, minus the central figure of a conductor. Individuals who were more closely involved with the project, the members of the core group, do not even carry the title of writers, let alone authors—they are repositioned as “literary workers,” made to do the work of canvassers, “data gatherers,” wearing lowly laborers’ overalls and hardhats. This can be recognized as an attempt to rethink the traditional literary roles: it would be very hard to select any type of contributors as primary (in respect to others as secondary), and even the core group, the Invisibles, had no identified primary mover. In fact, the division of writerly labor into writing as inventing and organizing (performed by the Invisibles) and writing as supplying the fragments of text (performed by citizens and “literary workers”) inflated the number of possible nominees for the title of an author to the point where the title lost its traditional meaning. Consequently, passersby, more or less unsuspecting citizens of Seattle who supplied fragments of text and the vocabulary of the novel, are elevated to the position of authors, a position that is no longer exclusive, nor meant to promote some at the expense of the rest, but a position of shared responsibility, a position of dialogue and communication since no text can come into existence if “data gatherers” and “authors” do not communicate (Invisible Seattle 227-228), and since each fragment is written with the expectation that it will be joined by other fragments of text. Finally, what all participants in the process of authoring Invisible Seattle have in common is the anonymity or, more precisely, the lack of importance and prominence that resides in a (singular) name: the novel is nominally authored by the city itself, but on almost every page the plurality of all subjects, authors, readers, characters (the city itself) is emphasized to the effect that the plurality of identity becomes the only recognizable
mode of existence (*Invisible Seattle* 63). Thus, all participants in the project intentionally or unwittingly collaborate in what Rob Wittig calls “role effacement,” erasure of all predetermined roles and consequently erasure of the hierarchy these roles support and the hierarchy that supports them (21). As a result, that which is commonly perceived as the author is revealed as a composite of contributions by numerous individuals, organized by a smaller group of activists, but a group nevertheless.

*Invisible Seattle* came into existence in reaction to the idea of singular authorship, which also means that it still caries the traces of that type of authorship. Considering that the novel was constructed in “the collective manner . . . as opposed to the concept of ‘individual genius’” (*Invisible Seattle* 227), it strangely abounds in clandestine activity of the singular author: “beneath the apparent diversity [of voices in the novel], you can detect the accents of this familiar voice” (*Invisible Seattle* 19), the voice that belongs to “Proteus (that strangely deific novelist in four dimensions)” (*Invisible Seattle* 113). This arcane authorial entity seems to be leading the way through the novel despite the many free choices that the reader is invited to make, but since the reader is so often mistaken for or tricked into being someone else, someone whom he or she is supposed to find, this secret single author is constantly unmasked as the city’s collective self (*Invisible Seattle* 164-166). The Invisibles apparently find themselves before an impossible task: they are determined to write a novel but at the same time struggle to break one of the most ‘important’ rules of novel writing—that the novel be written by a single person. What is more, they must write a novel that would undermine the very concept of singular authorship, which means that either their process or their product would not satisfy the

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9 In fact, if the entire project is perceived as some sort of elaborate literary prank conceived by an individual mastermind, practically every aspect of the novel would be negated, since *Invisible Seattle* is truly an example of a literary text that could not be produced by a solitary writer.
traditional notion of a novel. So what do they do? They go ahead and write in large numbers, in a series of more or less public acts, to finally assemble the text at an arts festival. Thus, against the norms that call for solitary acts of writing by a single individual, they emphasize the collaborativeness of the process of writing, and acts of writing that, being public, are in that sense also published, resulting in a type of almost instant public, communal, collaborative authorship.

However, in spite of all precaution, the Great Author continued to haunt the creation of *Invisible Seattle*. The process of writing the novel involved “Guest Writers,” responsible for shaping the gathered material into a coherent work of literature. These guest writers performed the work that would, according to the traditional division of literary labor, fall under the domain of editors. Yet, the traditional division implies a certain hierarchy in which the role of the writer is, relatively, most neutral and least fixed. Writers are immediately responsible only for the text before them, text that is being created whereas authors assume what is seemingly a greater responsibility—at least partial responsibility for all discourse their texts initiate—hence the need for a new role, guest writer, a temporary, conditional writer, that would replace the roles of author and editor, but would still be somewhat distinct from the standard role of a writer. Some of *Invisible Seattle*’s guest writers were well-known authors, such as Ken Kesey, but were nevertheless expected “to hold back on displays of writerly cleverness… encouraged to build upon the central joke of such a novel: thousands of voices being made to mimic the consistent production of a single author… [and] to discover a style that flaunts the novel’s multiple authorship” (*Invisible Seattle* 228-231). Although to those particular writers these might have seemed to be unusual requests, these are in fact essential requests of all authorship, for
even the most singular of singular authors tries his/her damnedest “to mimic the consistent production of [what is considered] a single author” as well as to come up with a multifaceted, complex work that inspires multiple readings. Already accomplished writers, and consequently recognized authors (some of them, such as Kesey, could even be seen as personifications of that ideal of solitary authorship), the guest writers of *Invisible Seattle* were pulled into a collaboration, but instructed to “stay away from the ideas of ‘creation,’ ‘inspiration’ and other hot flashes, and think instead in terms of ‘assembly,’ ‘playful recombination,’ and ‘astonishment’” (*Invisible Seattle* 231). Still, the participation of professional, established writers, even in a limited capacity can be seen as an attempt of the Invisibles to unload a portion of authorial responsibility on seemingly sturdier, or at least more easily identifiable subjects since, by de-authoring texts, as Barthes and Foucault proposed, responsibility is not lost, but merely redistributed.

In the case of *Invisible Seattle*, most of the individuals who contributed fragments of text were free to do so with little or no responsibility. As for the organizers of the projects, all “literary workers,” and even “Guest Writers,” they all did their part of the work, but have avoided being labeled as the originators, or singled out as the genius behind the novel by remaining anonymous. Ultimately, the responsibility for the text was assigned to the city itself, but even then it was not individualized as is often the case in traditionally presented authorship, but is shared, collective, and as such a product of collaboration. Same as in the example of Dorris and Erdrich, there is no telling what *Invisible Seattle* would be like if those who created it had not been to such an extent influenced, or burdened by the idea of authorship as a predominantly solitary accomplishment. No doubt, the novel’s focus would have necessarily shifted to, for
example, even more direct political or social engagement, or its genre aspect would have become its key feature. However, in both cases, the result would be a novel (or novels) of a lesser significance, which indicates that solitary authorship does not necessarily have to pose a hindrance to literary creativity, but only if the goal of those who practice it is to overcome (and not, as Dorris and Erdrich did, comply with) its rigid norms.

In both cases, the idea of authorship seems to ‘contaminate’ and is in return ‘contaminated’ by the idea of writing: in the example of *Invisible Seattle* the process of writing was collectivized not to counter the descriptions of writing, but the norms of solitary authorship, whereas Dorris and Erdrich attempted to singularize their collaborative writing process by resorting to nominally singular authorship. Yet in the latter partnership, collaboration remained somewhere in the middle, between solitary acts of writing (performed separately by Dorris and Erdrich) and their singular bylines; it consequently became legitimized neither in their writing nor in their authorship—as a result, it merely confirmed the already existing literary norms and preconceptions. *Invisible Seattle*, on the other hand, proved to be an interesting alternative to these norms of singular authorship, as well as the norms of writing as a solitary activity, but due to this very fact became so removed from the mainstream and marginalized as an experiment in literary invisibility. As the next example, *Caverns*, a novel written by an entire creative writing class, shows, it is the presence (or aura) of singular authorship that guarantees relative literary visibility, whereas nominal collaboration tends to either antagonize the public (*The Crown of Columbus*) or even ‘turn it off’ (*Invisible Seattle* had practically more writers than readers, since contributing to its text involved a much lesser effort and investment of time than reading the entire novel).
CAVERNS—SOLITARY AUTHORSHIP MANIFESTING IN WRITERLY COMPETITION

On a considerably smaller scale than the writing of Invisible Seattle, though still involving a large group, the writing of Caverns, a novel by fourteen collaborators, was organized by having those writers share the space of writing, something Dorris and Erdrich found impossible, along with sharing the text of the novel. The only problem with Caverns was that it was not considered by the critical part of the public to be a ‘real’ (enough) novel, and the writers who participated in creating it were not considered ‘real’ (enough) writers, writers with that authorial aura (at least thirteen of them were not). On one hand, the project was conceived and organized (as well as participated in) by an already established author, Ken Kesey, in the role of a creative writing instructor, a true literary celebrity who as such overshadowed his students, presenting an authority figure, as the instructor, the author, and an experienced writer. Additionally, the shared writing space was compromised by the fact that the novel was written in 1989 under the auspices of the University of Oregon’s creative writing program, which is a serious learning environment but, it would seem, exactly because of that not a serious enough writing environment. As if aware of the fact that writing a novel in a classroom would potentially hinder the creativity of his students, Kesey did opt for an alternative: “Our house was the classroom. My wife and I own this two-story place near campus—are making payments on it anyway—but we had never lived there. It’s about two blocks from the U of O library” (Caverns xiv), but this alternative was still close enough to a classroom (or close enough to the University); what is more, it was a classroom that he personally owned (or made payments for).
If in the case of Dorris and Erdrich the idea of singular authorship dominated all acts of writing, the process of writing, and the resulting authorship; and in *Invisible Seattle* the same idea served as a photographic negative from which openly collaborative models of writing and authorship were constructed, in the making of *Caverns*, the notion that only one person should be awarded the title of the nominal author manifested itself in Ken Kesey’s attempt to overcome what he recognized as the competitive tendency of literary authorship. After all, this tendency is particularly apparent in cases of group authorship: a number of individuals join forces to produce a text, but since each of them operates with the idea of nominally singular authorship as his or her only model, they more or less openly compete for that single, solitary spot. A trace of this type of competition can be found in the making of *A Million Penguins*, where there was open animosity among certain users, stemming from differences in views regarding the course of the novel, along with acts of vandalism (Mason & Thomas 5, 8), which could be interpreted as writerly rivalry. If there were any similar tendencies in the process of writing *Invisible Seattle*, they certainly did not surface in the text itself, nor in the accounts describing the process. However, in spite of their otherwise idyllic literary relationship, Dorris and Erdrich seem to suggest in *The Crown of Columbus*, in the example of Vivian and Roger, that collaboration can fall victim to competition, especially when the dominance over one’s partners or colleagues is (the sole) basis of one’s own authority.

In one of the most notable examples, competition within collaboration marked the writing of *The Whole Family* (1908), a composite novel produced by a dozen of Harper & Bros. house writers. Conceived by William Dean Howells as a portrait of the American
family life, *The Whole Family* was orchestrated by Elizabeth Jordan, the editor of *Harper’s Bazar*, who despite the contributions of, for example, Henry James, declared that the novel, along with the process of writing, was a “mess!” (*The Whole Family* xxxvi). In *The Whole Family*, following the opening, stuffy chapter by Howells that promised neither intensity of plot nor any remarkable development of characters, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman threw a sizeable wrench into the novel’s mechanism, by deciding to contradict both Howells’ (implied) author (the gentleman, the man, the ruler of his and worlds of the others) and narrator (a witness to a family event which should be used to confirm the dominant values of the society). In her chapter of the novel (“The Old-Maid Aunt”), Freeman created an entirely subversive character of Aunt Lily (initially conceived as a minor character), positioned at the opposite end of the spectrum from the one she was expected to create. The confusion Freeman created was such that for a while it was uncertain whether she would remain in the cast of *The Whole Family* writers.

Curiously enough, the decision to keep the two troublemakers, both Freeman and Aunt Lily, was not made by William Dean Howells, who was sort of the acting Author of the novel, by virtue of being its originator. “Don’t, don’t let her ruin our beautiful story!” he pleaded with Jordan (*The Whole Family* xxiii), who admired Freeman’s chapter, though not enough to herself make the decision about keeping it. Finally, the editor of *Harper’s Magazine* (Henry Mills Alden), the president of Harper & Brothers (Colonel George Harvey) and the firm’s general manager (Frederick A. Duneka) were consulted, each casting his vote in Aunt Lily’s favor. Thus, by a managerial decree the novel’s narrative functionality was established, although the remaining ten writers did their best to perform a type of writerly damage control, tipping the novel’s balance towards the expectations of
the moderately conservative public, while at the same time each attempting to raise his or her own level of authority at the expense of the unfortunate Aunt Lily and Mary E. Wilkins Freeman.

Recognizing this threat of individual vision endangering collaborative enterprise, the conductor of *Caverns*, Ken Kesey as the instructor of creative writing at the University of Oregon, sought intentionally to organize collaboration as a means of overcoming what he found to be a traditional competition between individual writers. It is unclear whether Kesey was inspired to write a novel with his class having witnessed the activity that resulted in *Invisible Seattle*, in which he was one of the more notable though less significant participants. Alternatively, it might have been the environment of an MFA writing program that lends itself to these types of group efforts under the guise of learning the trade, the environment in which collaboration is used to teach fledgling writers not how to work together in their professional future, but how to work better alone, once they depart from the academic nursery. In order to overcome the competition he found intrinsic to creative writing programs, but also taken for granted in the traditional notion of literary activity, Kesey turned to collaboration as the mode of production for his novel writing class (*Caverns* xiv). The type of competition where writers would be envious of each other’s success, or would fight over the attention of either publishers or the public, in other words, the type of competition that dominates the market place is detrimental to literature itself. One’s best effort is made possible by the efforts of others, if the task is not to dominate the other but rather to create the new. In other words, if the goal of literary activity would be to merely top the other, the result would be writing that would be limited by the success of one’s ‘opponents.’ Yet if literary progress is imagined as enhancing art, language,
and communication, the works of other writers can only enhance one’s own literary efforts. “Good writing glories all writers” (Caverns xiv), this was Kesey’s guiding principle, a principle that suggests collaboration beyond individual texts, collaboration on an intertextual level, borrowed from Malcolm Cowley, one of Kesey’s own instructors, or as he puts it, Wallace Stegner’s “assistant coaches” (Caverns xiii), during his student days at Stanford.

However, competition as the main obstacle to collaboration was removed in a rather authoritarian fashion, with Kesey in the role of a benevolent dictator. The project of completing a novel in the course of three academic terms was governed by few though strict rules, one of which gave Kesey, who was both the contributor and the ‘director’ of the novel, the authority to, if need be, swing the vote or have the last say on any crucial issue. As the examples of Invisible Seattle, and even A Million Penguins emphasized, larger groups of writers need to be governed in some manner—hence, this governing authority (or responsibility) is assumed by some participants, but as with any authority, it exists only if it is maintained by both those who govern and those who are governed. Unfortunately, and this was also the case with Caverns, this organizational or governing authority is often transformed into nominal (individual) authorship.

After all, it was Kesey himself who created all the rules, as well as the logistical framework of the novel—which made him the author of the novel (in the sense of “the first mover”). One of the most unorthodox of Kesey’s rules was that no writing should be done in solitude; in order for the pieces of text to come together as a whole, the acts of writing were to be shared among the entire group:

We would sit down at the table, design the section that we were going to write, divide it into segments enough to go around, and draw lots. We’d

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10 “If it was supposed to be done alone, we’d do it together” (Wittig 66), was also one of the rules set up by the Invisibles.
look up on the board, see what our task was…, then bend down and write. No talking, thirty minutes, then read it aloud. An immediate presentation before your peers… not of your ability to rewrite, but to write. There’s a difference.

(Caverns xviii)

Although it has an appearance of a controlled democracy, with Kesey acting as Caesar, this description of the writing process is bound to make some writers cringe; certainly it would make Dorris and Erdrich, or Ascher/Straus uncomfortable, since it more resembles the process of building a boat, or restoring a vintage car, rather than the writing of a literary text. The only aspect of it that might make it excusable to the traditional critic would be its instructional function, for in the context of literary practice this cannot be seen as ‘real writing,’ but a sort of training, writing with inflatable armbands, which is exactly how Dorris and Erdrich too saw their Milou North phase. But if collaborative authorship is instructional in that it offers a glimpse behind the stage, an insight into the mechanism of literary production, this also means that nominally singular authorship is purposefully misleading, designed to hide the processes that result in a literary product. For Alfred Bendixen, the educational aspect of Caverns provides “a revolutionary model for the teaching of creative writing” (“There Goes the Cave” BR 28), also meaning that it is most emphatically not a revolutionary model of writing, and could not be employed by any self-respecting proper writer. Yet, its “chief problem seems to be the absence of a recognizable authorial style” (“There Goes the Cave” BR 28), that coherence and unity which were found missing in A Million Penguins as well, or even more precisely, the absence of the singular author. Here, Bendixen articulates the prevalent notion that a “[p]art of the pleasure of a first-rate novel stems from listening to a distinctive voice…
the voice of an individual” (“There Goes the Cave” BR 28), or the voice of the author. This, of course, either undermines the use of polyvocality in literature, or it takes for granted that in instances of polyvocality those other voices, voices other than the storyteller’s, are imitations or impersonations and not genuine voices. Kesey, however, seems to have been aware of this, and has motivated his class in the opposite direction. The sharing of the act of writing, writing in a large group, resulted in the diminishing of the authorial self: “You couldn’t be too much yourself” (Knox-Quinn 310). The outcome was, according to Kesey, a form of creative liberation, similar to the result of his demand that the group writes about something they “really don’t know anything about” (Knox-Quinn 111). This, as he puts it, “frees you from yourself,” being oneself is no longer a requirement, one is allowed to rewrite oneself along with writing the text, which is exactly what collaboration does, it frees the individual from mandatory solitude, frees him or her from even attempting to carry the mythical burden of the entire world (or text).

In Caverns there are as many key characters as there are authors which can be seen as an attempt to accomplish some sort of equal representation, though each member of the collective seems to have had a strong notion of what authorship is about: a failure to show up at a writing session, for example, could easily result in one’s character being done in by other authors (xix), reducing the competition reality-show style. Even within the text, two characters are battling over the authorship of a journalistic account of their adventures, the search for the legendary cave containing the source of the entire human knowledge, which can be seen as a symptom of the authorial anxiety. A similar phenomenon occurs in Invisible Seattle, where the Author constantly resurfaces in the
text, as not necessarily a formed, identifiable character, but a menacing, dark force seeking to control the text as well as the other characters, which suggests that singular authorship, whether a myth or a fact, cannot be simply ignored, but must be actively deconstructed. In the case of Dorris and Erdrich, this force is largely acknowledged, from the solitary, separate acts of writing to their names that appeared separately in the bylines of their published work. When it comes to nominal authorship, the cover of Caverns offers a host of clues regarding the dominant hierarchy of the byline. Though it states that Caverns is “A NOVEL BY O.U. LEVON,” the singular pseudonym, U[iversity of] O[regon] Novel spelled backwards, is overshadowed by a reference to a true literary celebrity who orchestrated its creation:

**INTRODUCTION BY KEN KESEY**

Kesey’s importance is further emphasized by the fact that his name appears in the alphabetized list of authors, the rest of whom are completely unknown to the literary public—of the fourteen, he is the only ‘real’ writer, already the author of other popular works, he is the author(ity) behind Caverns, at least as far as the publishers, the critics, and a considerable part of the public are concerned. Furthermore, the novel’s copyright belongs exclusively to Kesey, indicating that the shadow of the Author is mostly hidden in the corners of the literary activity that is closest to the realms of market and property. Of course, it remains debatable whether the industry simply panders to the prevailing audience expectations or whether it is actively shaping them, but in this case this is irrelevant since the fact remains that even the majority of fully collaborative texts appears under singular names or pseudonyms in order not to challenge the deep-seated norms, or merely undermine a particular text’s sales potential. It is important to note that the
Caverns’ cover offers no false information in regard to the novel’s authorship but that this information is arranged in such a way to exploit Ken Kesey’s reputation as an already recognized singular author. Additionally, his introduction places this novel clearly in the context of creative writing as taught and practiced in the academic environment, cementing the notion that this novel is only an exercise in authorship, demanding less responsibility from its makers, but also from critics and readers. In this context, the process of writing Caverns may have been less competitive, but only because the shadow of the solitary author (embodied by Kesey himself) continued to control it, limiting free(r) experimentation.

CONCLUSION

If compared to the collaboration between Dorris and Erdrich and Invisible Seattle, the example of Caverns literalizes the claim that the idea of (singular) authorship influences the writing process: after all, rather than the idea of the singular author, Ken Kesey preceded the actual writing of the novel as a singular author, continuing to exercise his authority by creating the writing rules, by being responsible for the publication of the novel (chances are Penguin Books would have been less interested for this text were it not for Kesey’s renown), and by dominating the text not by his writerly skills, but by his very name, the name of the author. Because, and this notion is developed in the next chapter, the name of the author is often the clearest, if not the only indication of the type of authorship acknowledged by those who participated in the creation of a particular text. Dorris and Erdrich may have shared their writerly duties, but they mostly relied on the idea of authorship as a solitary feat. The Invisibles as instigators of Invisible Seattle
attempted to conceptualize collaboration not as a generic type of authorship, but rather as an antithesis to the solitary model. Finally, in the example of Caverns, collaboration was developed in an experimental environment under the patronage of the author, practiced not for its own sake, but rather as a tool that would enable each student to be a better individual writer (and, consequently, individual, solitary author). In all three examples, the process of writing was undoubtedly shared (or collaborative), yet it yielded somewhat different forms of nominal authorship. Writers such as Dorris and Erdrich (Ascher/Straus, the McGoldricks etc.) clearly subscribed to the sacred solitariness of the writing act: even though they declared themselves collaborators they adamantly rejected even the possibility of sharing the act along with the process. Invisible Seattle and Caverns are proof that sharing along all lines is possible. Hence, although this appears to be somewhat of a chicken-or-the-egg conundrum, the conclusion must be that the very practice of literary writing is affected, and to a degree dictated, by the way in which authorship is imagined (as a result, a ‘reward’ for the writing).

In summation, the idea of solitary, singular authorship indeed plays a significant role in openly collaborative writing. In fact, as was shown partly on the example of Caverns, but especially on the example of Dorris and Erdrich, it is this idea itself that prevents overtly collaborative authorship from fully materializing from that collaborative writing. After all, Caverns was recognized as Kesey’s experiment—the position of the instructor or mentor also secured the novel’s (honorary?) authorship for him; and Dorris and Erdrich found that collaborative authorship is not nearly strong enough a platform to build a respectable literary career on—though it served well to tickle the attention of the public, it was too flimsy to bear the scrutiny of traditionally-minded critics, and in the
majority of Dorris and Erdrich’s texts the author continued to exist in the form of the primary writer.

This might offer a clue to understanding why the majority of writers who produce their work in collaboration nevertheless choose to present it under the cover of nominal singularity—most often this is the case with genre writers such as the McGoldricks. Even the example of *Invisible Seattle* points towards this need for authorial singularity—the city of Seattle can be imagined as a singular entity, a complex organism of a sort—though its organizers have managed to break the solitary sanctity of the act of writing turning it into a shared experience, as did the participants in Ken Kesey’s writing class. This leads to the conclusion that there are indeed instances when the myth of the solitary author can be employed to benefit the formation of overtly collaborative authorship—as an idea to be deconstructed and creatively redesigned. However, for every *Invisible Seattle* or *Caverns* there are dozens of novels written by partners who share neither the writing act nor the nominal authorship—practices of Dorris and Erdrich (or the McGoldricks) are simply much closer to the singular norm. This can be seen as a clear evidence that it is (almost) impossible to create literature, especially literature that is considered art, and even more precisely that it is if not impossible then futile to write novels completely free of the hold of the idea or image of authorship as a solitary accomplishment. Still, the fact that new and innovative collaborative novels continue to crop up points towards the need to continue to question the traditional model of authorship, and create in its stead a more liberating notion of shared literary labor.
Singular Name Denoting Plural Responsibility

All lists of the best, or the greatest, the most influential, or the most important literary works have one particular thing in common. Whoever turns to Mortimer Adler and Charles Van Doren’s *How to Read a Book*, Harold Bloom’s *Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*, Waldhorn, Weber Zeiger’s *Good Reading: A Guide for Serious Readers* or Anthony Burgess’ *99 Novels: The Best in English Since 1939*, discovers that they almost as a rule recommend books attributed to singular rather than collaborative authors, or one author per book (i.e. published text and not a manuscript). Surely, singling certain texts at the expense (or from the expanse) of the entire history of literature is an ungrateful task, every list is, by definition, exclusive, yet rare (overt) collaborative exceptions serve only to prove the standard of solitary authorship. Hence, in his selection Jorge Louis Borges, along with some timeless and authorless tales, like *The Bhagavad-Gita* or *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, includes only two overt collaborations: his own with Adolfo Bioy-Casares, *New Stories of Bustos Domecq*, and Kasner and Newman’s *Mathematics and the Imagination (Selected Non-Fictions 500-512)*. In Clifton Fadiman’s *Lifetime Reading Plan*, the only collaboration is that of Marx and Engels. As for openly collaborative titles on Boston Public Library’s “100 Most Influential Books of the Century” there are only *Art of French Cooking* by Simone Beck, Louise Bertholle, and Julia Child, and *Our Bodies Our Selves; A Book by and for Women* by Boston Women’s Health Book Collective (http://www.bpl.org/research/AdultBooklists/influential.htm). Among New York Public Library’s “Books of the Century,” collaborations are represented by *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, United Nations Charter (1945), *Woman Suffrage and Politics: The Inner Story of the Suffrage Movement*
(1923), and *Sisterhood Is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement* (http://legacy.www.nypl.org/research/chss/events/booklist.html), whereas in *The Telegraph’s “110 best books: The Perfect Library,”* the only collaboration is *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/3672376/110-best-books-The-perfect-library.html). Certainly, one conclusion might be that literature (especially literature as art) is not a particularly fertile ground for open collaboration. After all, from 1901 to the very day, the Nobel Prize in Literature is the only category in which joint efforts of any number of individuals were never recognized (in 1904 the award was split between Frédéric Mistral and José Echegaray y Eizaguirre and in 1917 between Karl Adolph Gjellerup and Henrik Pontoppidan, but the writers were, however, not collaborators, at least they did not collaborate with one another) (“All Nobel Prizes.” Nobelprize.org. 9 Feb 2011 http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/lists/all/). This would suggest that there is a stark difference between how, for example, physics and literature are practiced and perceived, or better yet, how the sciences are practiced and perceived in comparison to literature. The actual differences, however, between numerous spheres of human interest are far lesser than the similarities; collaboration as one of the principles equally belies efforts in sciences and in arts, but when it comes to presenting those efforts in the realm of literary art the singular byline is practically an undisputed norm. In fact, the practice of naming the author cements the very idea of modern literary authorship. A single glance at the history of literature as art, leaving the lifetime-reading-plan type of lists aside, is enough to notice that the vast majority of texts are marked by the names of their authors; and that of those names, the vast majority are singular names, meaning that there is usually one author (named) per each text.
One way of understanding this is to consider that by virtue of being identified by his or her name the singular author becomes much more than a person. This is what led Michel Foucault to suggest that, “the ‘author-function’… does not refer, purely and simply, to an actual individual insofar as it simultaneously gives rise to a variety of egos and to a series of subjective positions that individuals of any class may come to occupy” (Foucault 130-131). Of course, here Foucault does not propose that the said “subjective positions” are to be “occup[ied]” by a group of “individuals” at the same time (and in regard to the same text). Even the “variety of egos” does not imply a variety, or multitude of individuals—arguably, a variety of egos can inhabit or be inhabited by only one person. However, if the author-function indeed “gives rise” to multiple egos (and if ego is a more or less organized, or coherent response of an individual to the outside world, or (shared) reality) and subjective positions (that presumably tempt an individual to orientate him or herself in respect, in the literary context, to the text), it is more probable that these multiple and distinct invitations to position oneself in respect to a particular text are answered by multiple individuals rather than a single person. Hence, Foucault’s definition of the author-function can be seen as a clue towards multiple, shared authorship. Consequently, the purpose of this chapter is to show that any name supplied as the name of the author necessarily refers to an authorial plurality, or more precisely, that any name or pseudonym (as well as the omission of name) denotes not a single person, but to an amount of responsibility for a particular text assumed by a number of more or less interconnected individuals.

The key feature of the notion of singular authorship, that is the modern concept of authorship, is that the responsibility for every published text is attached less to a
particular writer, or a particular person, than to a name that is supplied as the author’s byline. The main function of authorship, whether seen as singular or collaborative, is to distribute the responsibility for a particular text, or more precisely, not (only) for the writing of the text, but for all aspects of literary exchange that a particular text generates. This was also suggested by Foucault who concluded that: “[t]he author of a novel may be responsible for more than his own text; if he acquires some ‘importance’ in the literary world, his influence can have significant ramifications” (Foucault 132). However, it is possible to only slightly expand Foucault’s claim and suggest that anyone seeking the status of ‘author’ for a particular text is always responsible for more than just his/her own text, regardless of his or her relative “importance” and “influence.”

After all, a singular name does not even need to refer to one person, but can stand for a collaborative collective, whereas as a single writer can manage a number of pinnames or pseudonyms. Hence it is possible, as Robert Griffin finds, that, “there are very few authors who did not resort to anonymity or pseudonymity at least once in their careers” (Griffin 7). Søren Kierkegaard, for example, created more than a dozen pseudonyms that served him to stage a debate that seemingly provoked wider participation (Westphal 35). Georges Simenon used some two dozen pseudonyms to account for his prodigious output.¹ Most notably, Fernando Pessoa devised almost two bus loads of authorial personae, each with a more or less distinctive style (not to mention biography, or even physiognomy), thus blurring the distinction between ‘author’ and

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¹ As can be seen from Simenon’s interview in *The Paris Review* (http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/5020/the-art-of-fiction-no-9-georges-simenon), he was also acutely aware of the division between “commercial” and “noncommercial” literature—multiple pseudonyms also allowed him to bridge those and other literary divisions, similar to Dorris and Erdrich who used their pseudonym (Milou North), their separate names, and their joint byline for different aspects of their literary production.
‘character’ (Steiner http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2001/jun/03/poetry.features1). The fact that the singular name is applied much more often than the plural (especially in literary art) is an indication that the name of the author is supposed to serve a much wider purpose than merely identifying a particular person and connecting him/her with a particular text. This wider purpose is to individualize (or singularize) and hence limit or contain the total responsibility for a particular text: the name of the author serves as a type of a lightning rod that is supposed to attract the attention of whomever seeks to find the person(s) responsible for a particular text. In these terms, the function of the name is mostly symbolic, since the greatest part of the public does not seek the author with an intention of establishing direct contact—the name of the author is simply a form of guarantee that the standard literary procedure was followed in the making of a text in question. To be sure, the singular name (as a rule) does not reflect the conditions of creation of any text, such as the relationship of the writers with his/her editors and other, less formal ‘helpers.’ However, in order for authorship as such to function, multiple individuals need to support it and consequently assume portions of responsibility. That is, even when the author is identified (or concealed) with a singular name, the effort (and the responsibility) that goes into a particular text is the total sum of individual efforts performed by a number of persons, each of whom has a bigger or a smaller share of responsibility for the final ‘product.’ Thus, as a symbol, the singular name of the author,

2 It may be a bit crude comparison, but most consumers would be disinclined to buy a product that would have no name and no manufacturer’s name—such products would, if anything, appear potentially unsafe. On the other extreme, a product that would list the manufacturer of every single component or ingredient could also be seen as potentially unsafe—it would seem as if the responsibility for it is fragmented, as if no one assumes full responsibility for it. A similar dynamics is at play in literature as well, anonymous texts, as well as openly collaborative (especially those with numerous participants) are simply not trusted enough—a mere suggestion of authorial singularity (singular pseudonyms for collaborative teams) is enough to set the reader’s mind at ease, and allow him or her to comfortably envision a singular ‘interlocutor’ at the other end of a particular text.
or indeed any (number of) name(s), only stands as for collaborative effort, most of which remains unnamed or anonymous. In short, whether a byline consists of a name, a pseudonym, or more names than one, it denotes a (greater) plurality of authorship, a plurality that, due to the fact that it is always only partly named, it is also always (at least partly) anonymous.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Searching for that very first real (named) author, the author in the modern sense of the word, one could turn to Andrew Bennett who compiles a list of nominations ranging from Homer and Hesiod to Samuel Johnson and William Wordsworth (Bennett 29-30). Yet Bennett, citing Gregory Nagy, finds this particular contest futile since the idea of authorship that is still largely accepted today is far more recent than any of the nominated (Bennett 34), meaning that this label of a singular author is not quite compatible with the conditions under which particular (pre-author) figures created their texts. The practice of naming the author seems to have always been the norm—but only because it is retrospectively applied to even the earliest examples of literature. There is, for example, the case of Instructions of Šuruppak by Šuruppak, one of the earliest texts, a five-thousand-year-old handbook on piety and propriety. Though authored (or merely compiled) by Šuruppak, the king of the city of Šuruppak, which would make him one of the first known (and named) authors, there is considerable suspicion that the name taken to be that of the author is actually the name of the city, since this king appears in only one version of the Sumerian King List (Lambert 92). In other words, the authorship of these Instructions was determined ages after the initial composition (or even publication), and
connected to a particular person (that may or may not have ever existed) only by (relative) scientific consensus. Looking further, at what is considered to be one of the precursors to the novel as a form, *The Tale of Genji* by Murasaki Shikibu, it is conspicuous that even the authorship of that eleventh-century Japanese classic is less straightforward than the author’s name suggests. On one hand, as many as twenty one (of the fifty four) of the novel’s chapters have been attributed to Murasaki Shikibu’s daughter; while on the other, a computer analysis, though not necessarily the safest and the most precise method of establishing authorship (or merely writership), detected considerable differences in the style of the last ten chapters as compared to the rest of the text (Tyler xviii). What is more, Murasaki Shikibu’s actual name was never recorded—her penname being a combination of her heroine’s name (Murasaki), and her father’s governmental position (Shikibu) (Tyler xvii), which indicates that, even in its initial implementations, the singular name of the author was likely a pseudonym meant to stand for plural effort.

On the other hand, Mark Rose, as well as Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, identify John Milton as the earliest modern author:

… Milton… concealed his identity as an author until the early 1640s, when his desire to be publicly identified as a supporter of Cromwell took precedence over his preference for anonymity. Milton continued to decline to profit financially from his work, however. Only the Restoration, which deprived him of his pension and other resources, caused him to consent to the now historic agreement with Samuel Smiles for the publication of *Paradise Lost.*

(Ede & Lunsford 80)
Here, then, are three key ingredients of modern authorship: an individual steps out of the common anonymity; s/he does so in order to assume responsibility other than that merely related to particular texts; another motive is to reap financial benefits of his or her labor. Of these three factors (being named, responsibility, expectation of profit), the first two are in direct connection, meaning that one is automatically allotted at least some portion of responsibility merely by being named. In this context, to refer briefly to Foucault, it very much matters who is speaking (Foucault 115), in the sense that by unloading the responsibility onto a function, all (literary) labor becomes equally anonymous, each participant in the literary exchange remains familiar with, or aware of only him or herself. Thus, in the context of authorship as a collaborative endeavor, the name of the author (whether singular or plural) is essentially the name of the other—a sort of a promise that there is indeed someone else at the other end of the text.

From the historical perspective, authorial responsibility was quite real, even tangible, especially in instances of texts offensive to the powers that be. Prior to the introduction of copyright that drew the line between, on one side, authors as the originators of work, and on the other, publishers and printers as mediators, the control of print in, for example, Britain was achieved by granting monopolies to a limited number of printing houses belonging to the Stationers’ Company, who were as such responsible for the character of published material (Greene 3, 46). In cases when authors were unknown, or in cases of pirated works, publishers, printers, or even readers were held accountable for merely being in contact with, or possession of a text, thus taking part in the collaborative liability for a particular work, and consequently its collaborative authorship. The frustration of the regulators was manifested in their determination to hold
responsible anyone whom they could bring into connection with the illicit printed material: “let the Person in whose Possession [an offending book] is found, be Reputed and Punish’d as the Author of the said Book, unless he Produce the Person, or Persons, from whom he receiv’d it” (from L’Estrange’s Considerations, qtd. in Greene 9). This is another clue towards the plurality of authorial responsibility, as was imagined in the time when the figure of the singular author was taking shape: in order to protect the reading public, as well as the entrepreneurial basis of literary exchange (printers and publishers), the singular scapegoat entity had to be constructed, punishing an individual body (which in L’Estrange’s case meant quite literally anybody) served to correct and control the larger, collective authorial body (everybody).

In 1709, the Statute of Queen Anne, the earliest version of the modern copyright law, was enacted. It entered into force in 1710, granting authors ownership over their works and the opportunity to benefit financially from their labor in exchange for being named as authors of particular works. The link between solidification of (singular) authorship and the introduction of copyright was made, among others, by Mark Rose, who emphasizes that the property rights of authors were to a large extent a pretense under which publishers became the true beneficiaries of the legal protection of authors (Rose 3-5)—in comparison to the pre-copyright era the publishers’ investment was more secure, and their legal liability somewhat reduced. What is more, as Jody Greene argues, “[t]o claim responsibility for a work after 1710 was not only to advance a proprietary claim… but also to admit liability for its contents” (Greene 4). In order to extract material benefit from their work, authors had to register themselves as holders of copyright: “… the provision concerning entry in the register remedied the greatest single problem that had
faced would-be-controllers of the English press for more than fifty years: the difficulty of finding and holding liable the authors of printed works” (Greene 5). Again, it has to be taken into account that, by the early 18th century, publishing in Britain was already an important segment of the economy; thus by individualizing liability in the singular person of the author, the adverse effects for the economy could be minimized and the ‘punishability’ of offenders maximized, while the flow of ideas remained under the control of the Crown. In a way, for a promise of a smaller portion of profit—smaller, that is, when compared to the profit generated by publishers—authors willingly became the nominal whipping boys of the publishing industry.

Ironically, the same connection between liability, property, and authorship was made in the case of Daniel Defoe. As Jody Greene explains, in 1702 Defoe wrote a pamphlet in which he criticized the hypocrisy of both the government and its opposition, *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*. Needless to say, the pamphlet was published anonymously. The man who delivered the manuscript to the printer was arrested. The printer was also arrested. The former denounced Defoe, Defoe went into hiding, copies of the pamphlet were burnt by a hangman. Soon enough, Defoe was apprehended, pleaded guilty placing himself at “the end of the chain of liability”, and was punished rather severely: a stiff fine, three terms in pillory, jail, and seven years on probation (Greene 112-119). As Greene points out, Defoe could have easily avoided the heavy hand of the law simply by not admitting to be the pamphlet’s author, but in his mind the claim of authorship potentially presented both punishment and reward: “if an Author has not the right of a Book… ‘twould be very hard the Law should pretend to punish him for it” (qtd. in Greene 124), and risking to be punished for incendiary writing also meant that one’s
ownership of profitable writing will be protected. Today the times have changed, and the authorial responsibility can, ideally, no longer result in similar bodily harm. In truth, this is not quite the case, and it suffices to refer to *International Pen—Writers in Prison Committee Half-Yearly Caselist: To June 30 2009* which lists 644 worldwide cases of authors that have been either imprisoned, receiving death threats, attacked or murdered.

However, for the sake of the present argument, it is useful not to define responsibility in terms of legal liability (the stick) or copyright (the carrot), but to consider it in the more basic terms, as responsibility based primarily on moral grounds. This relationship between authorship and responsibility was already made by Seán Burke who identifies authorial “accountability for the discourse produced,” finding that it is manifested in imagining literature as a type of continuing dialogue (*The Ethics of Writing* 185-186). Burke dates “the concept of authorship as a primary ethical category” to Plato (*The Ethics of Writing* 175), who has apparently made a step forward from the more immediate type of authorship3, towards the modern idea of authorship where the individual author serves not only to connect a body of texts, but a discourse cluster. In this sense, the name of the author is, as Foucault puts it, “a finger pointed at someone” (*Foucault* 121), which allows the (anonymous) majority of those who participate in the literary exchange to relieve themselves of their (immediate) responsibility for a particular text, or discourse, by singling out the author—in both the positive and the negative sense of the phrase. This is to say that authorship is indeed an ethical category, regardless of whether it is a question of who points the “finger,” or at whom it is “pointed”—dispensing and accepting authorship both come with a moral obligation for the

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3 Where “a responsible subject emerges from the collective experience to take responsibility for the words spoken or written in his or her name” (*The Ethics of Writing* 174).
continuation of literary communication (on the more abstract level), but also with potentially serious consequences (as the PEN’s Writers in Prison Committee can confirm).

A similar notion of authorship as responsibility is confirmed by Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford who, referring to Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist’s discussion of Mikhail Bakhtin, define authorship as “the assignment of ‘responsibility for the acts that words are…”’ (Ede & Lunsford 92-93). This responsibility is shared on the very basic level—and in the same sense texts are “not just shared but heteroglot, hybrid, competing” (Ede & Lunsford 92)—since the text relies on the collective (or collectively maintained) foundation of language. Of course, this constitutes a rather broad definition of authorship, one that goes far beyond the nominal (and usually singular) author to include every reader of a particular text, every person who comes into meaningful contact with that text. But this definition certainly opens space for imagining authorship as collaboration, especially if the language itself is seen, as Ede and Lunsford suggest, as a system created and maintained by numerous ‘users’ (not unlike literature itself). In this context, the institution of the (singular) author can be seen as a sun figure, an element around which literary activity is organized in a more or less hierarchical fashion—since the role of every other participant in the (traditional) literary exchange is defined not only according to his or her relationship to the text, but to the author as well. In other words, traditionally, by turning to the text, all participants in the literary exchange turn to the author (even the writer if the author is “impl[ied],” as suggested by Wayne Booth (Booth 128). However, if language is seen, in Bakhtinian terms of heteroglossia, “on the border between oneself and the other” (Bakthin qtd. in Ede & Lunsford 92), and if every
discourse, even that accomplished through a literary text, contains a degree of addressivity, defined by Volosinov as “a quality of turning to someone” (Volosinov 99), then authorship can be imagined as a type of broad collaboration. What this implies is that the responsibility for a particular literary text is necessarily shared, and exactly because it is shared, because it involves multiple subjects, it can be perceived as a moral burden, as responsibility to (and for) the other person, and not merely a responsibility to (and for) the literary text.

In *The Company We Keep*, Wayne Booth lists nine types of author’s responsibilities, and five types of reader’s responsibilities, all of which are types of responsibility to (and for) the other, another being at the other end of the text, even when that other is oneself, an other defined by the text: the author as “a Person Who Must Live in a World in Which Art Plays Only One of Many Roles” or the author as “Career Author,” and the reader “as Flesh-and-Blood Reader” (Booth 126-138). However, at the moment, it suffices to describe authorial responsibility as responsibility for the other existing at the other end of the text, as well as responsibility for being the other to that other, responsibility for holding up to one’s own end of the ‘deal,’ one’s own end of the literary dialogue. According to Burke, “[a]ny onymous or signatory discourse accepts that the bearer(s) of its name is ethically answerable to whatever tribunal may be instituted on its account” (*The Ethics of Writing* 208). In this context, the name (or the signature) of the author could be seen as a signal of that responsibility. In other words, if taken as a sign, the name of the author can be recognized as a sign of responsibility, meaning not necessarily in the traditional terms of exclusive responsibility of the one

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4 Volosinov’s notion of addressivity was mentioned in the introductory definition of authorial responsibility, and is repeated here because it fits so well with Bakhtin’s concept of language.
named, but in the sense that this sign should be seen as the mark of (total) responsibility for a particular text, responsibility that is shared (in larger or lesser degree) by all those who interact with the text.

*(SINGULAR) NAME: J. D. SALINGER*

If this responsibility is perceived as the burden of authorship, meaning if one concentrates more on the negative aspects of authorship that appear when an individual is forced to bear certain responsibility beyond what is comfortable, it could be defined a bit more closely not by enumerating ways in which it manifests, but by identifying instances in which (some) authors try to escape it. One of the more obvious ways is ghostwriting where one author invests his or her renown, while the other invests his or her writing skills in a mutually beneficial arrangement. Again, it may not be a mystery why a non-literary celebrity would need the services of a writing professional—writing can be particularly uncomfortable for those who essentially do not wish to write. But, as one self-proclaimed “with writer” reveals, ghostwriting can also shield the ghostwriter from some less pleasant consequences of authorship (media exposure can be extremely uncomfortable for those who wish to avoid it): “While your celebrity partner is conversing with talk show hosts from Cleveland to Calcutta, you can work on your next project” (Felder 21). In other words, every writer can use some sort of a lightning rod that will attract any (unwanted) attention from the audience. Yet, authors are not merely writers, and are hence forced to “[act] out the public rituals of individuality” (Noel Polk qtd. in Becnel 103), whether it be participating in talk shows or the political life of their countries, to the extent they find bearable. This is, of course, in cases where individuals
(mostly writers) are fortunate to be acknowledged as authors. In other words, celebrity can be seen as a symptom of this wider type of responsibility, in the sense that some writers are trying to relieve it, while others are trying to escape it altogether. Here, the concept of celebrity is useful only if it is defined as exaggerated ‘namedness,’ a situation when the name of the author becomes as relevant (or even more so) than the texts with which it is associated.

Thus, in an attempt to relieve the pressure of fame, William Faulkner, for example, hid behind the image of an unassuming farmer, both when he received the Nobel Prize and the William Dean Howells Medal (Becnel 118, 105). Still, he answered the call of Dwight Eisenhower to better the US foreign image by being a sort of cultural ambassador for the State Department (Becnel 120), which can be seen as his acknowledgement of the greater authorial responsibility. And it is exactly these aspects of responsibility that authors tend to grow uncomfortable with, to the point of removing themselves completely from the public eye. To be sure, Faulkner did not mind the spotlight that much, he only sought ways to make himself comfortable when receiving attention that went beyond merely literary consideration. However, there are cases of writers whose literary activity was completely blocked and who were forced into a type of (again, literary) isolation by the amount of (unwanted) attention they received.

One of the most famous examples of such authorial agoraphobia is the case of J. D. Salinger, who had put in great efforts to revert back to a non-author state of existence. For this purpose he was unavailable to the public from roughly 1965, the year his last piece, “Hapworth 16, 1924,” was published, to his very death in 2010. What is more, Salinger’s insistence that his photo should not appear on covers of his books, as well as
that his name should be the only writing on those covers (apart from titles), indicates that he wanted the authorial responsibility to be connected to the name and not the body (or an image of a person). This is consistent with Peggy Kamuf’s claim that…

… [a] signature… is not an author or even simply the proper name of an author. It is the mark of an articulation at the border between life and letters, body and language. An articulation both joins and divides; it joins and divides identity with/from difference. A difference from itself, within itself, articulates the signature of the text it signs.

(Kamuf 39-40)

Or as Derrida puts it, “a written signature implies the actual empirical nonpresence of the signer” (Limited Inc 20). Not only that, but every signature, and that also means every byline, every name accompanying a text is at the same time a part of that text (De Ville 62). In this sense, the name of the author ‘belongs’ not to a particular person, but to a particular text, since one encounters the text and not the person. Consequently, every name of the author can be seen as a penname, a pseudonym of a sort, and “J. D. Salinger’ is not ‘Jerome David Salinger,’ nor ‘Jerry,’ but a point (and if editors, translators, publishers are identified, only one of the points) around which authorial responsibility is oriented, or a symbol that this responsibility exists, is assumed, and even should be assumed.

Paradoxically, Salinger’s disappearing act produced for him both the anonymity and the notoriety. Although he did his best to capture the life of “a private citizen” (Paul Alexander qtd. in Weber 91), he chose to make his work perpetually available, he chose to continue to profit from it, and that very fact made it impossible for him to become fully anonymous. The result was that even his refusal to publish became if not a text, then
certainly a literary event, in the process of “ commodification [of] silence” as defined by Myles Weber (Weber 1). Offering nothing but his absence, Salinger provoked the audience to continually read and interpret this absence (of text) as it would read and interpret any actual text, finding it to be “a puzzling masterpiece” no less (Weber 12), not a mere silence but an anti-text, since some, like Weber, scanned it for meaning that might have never been there. This would suggest that authorship is a state one cannot simply exit, particularly if one chooses not to break the financial links with the literary market. But more importantly, authorship is never exclusively a matter of personal choice, meaning that a person is recognized as an author by others. Therefore it is a result of a relationship, and not a relationship of person to person, but person to text, regardless of whether that person writes it or reads it. This can possibly be best illustrated if we consider a writer such as Nella Larsen who seemingly managed to escape her authorship for almost a third of her life. Unlike Salinger, she did not have to try very hard to detach herself from her texts, possibly because her texts were not as successful as Salinger’s, but almost certainly because of her race and gender as well. Yet every time a reader picks up a copy of Passing, every time a critic or a scholar refers to either her or her texts, she becomes an author—not a celebrity, but an author—by virtue of her readers’ relationship to her text.

Once a person is identified as an author, the responsibilities prove too numerable, indeed so numerable that merely avoiding fans and media is not enough. As Weber puts it, “[s]ilent writers remain authors even if they never write again. What they don’t publish constitutes a literary product” (Weber 2). This “product” can be compared to an actual text in that it, in Salinger’s case, generates further texts—which is actually one of the
ways in which all authorship can be seen as collaborative, with texts inspiring new texts. Salinger’s silence, thus, inspired dozens of newspaper stories and scholarly articles, from “Stalking J.D. Salinger: A Mean Feat” (by Thomas Collins, Newsday, 1 May 1988) to “The Holly Refusal: A Vedantic Interpretation of J.D. Salinger’s Silence” (by Dipti R. Pattanaik, MELUS, Summer 1998). But, more importantly, choosing not to write and/or publish, as Salinger did, becomes an invitation to other participants in the system of literature to assume increasingly larger portion of authorial responsibilities, only further emphasizing that authorship is indeed plural, in the sense that it does not only take others to recognize an individual’s literary effort, but that those others add relevance and meaning to that individual’s efforts by creating new texts. Thus, in 1977, Esquire magazine featured an anonymous short story “From Rupert—With No Promises,” suggesting that Salinger has broken his silence. It was soon discovered that the story was written by the magazine’s editor, Gordon Lish, who accounted for his ventriloquism by suggesting “that if Salinger was not going to write stories, someone had to write them for him” (Weber 88). In the same sense, we can recognize the collection of letters to Salinger, Letters to J. D. Salinger edited by Chris Kubica and Will Hochman (2002, U of Wisconsin P), as a collaborative effort to fill the void of Salinger’s silence, or as taking part in the authorship nominally attributed to Salinger, but out of his proprietary grasp.\(^5\) Consequently, Salinger as an author, made his audience, the public, the readership, do more work than is seemingly expected in the case of nominally singular authorship. After all, for purposes of literary communication or exchange, J.D. Salinger did practically

\(^5\) To further corroborate that such individualistic authorial figures inspire, or even provoke literary collaboration, there is also the example of “Open Letter to J. D. Salinger (On the Occasion of His Literary Decomposition” by Davis Schneiderman and Don Meyer (from Memorials to Future Catastrophes, Kansas City: Jaded Ibis Productions, 2008)).
nothing, while his fans bombarded him with letters, literary figures such as Gordon Lish obsessed over his refusal to publish\(^6\), and scholars struggled to imbue the silence with meaning, even if it meant treating the absence of a text as the text itself (Weber). In other words, Salinger’s public, the public of his published work as well as the public of his silence, invested significantly more effort into attempts to perpetuate literary communication with him, and in the process ended up creating literature \textit{for} him or \textit{instead of} him. By allowing the public to fill the empty space of his authorial identity, Salinger himself became a type of collaboratively authored text and a collaborator (albeit a highly uncooperative one) participating in the creation of the oeuvre recognized under his name.

The most recent example of this collaboration is \textit{60 Years Later: Coming Through the Rye} by Fredrik Colting, or John David California (his pseudonym), a Swedish writer who imagined Holden Caulfield’s golden years only to be sued by Salinger for the infringement of copyright. This, for all practical purposes, was also Salinger’s final act of acknowledging his authorial responsibility, although executed by his legal representatives, who consequently might also be seen as Salinger’s collaborators. If observed in that light, Salinger’s behavior, or more precisely his attempt to disengage from the literary scene, can be recognized as a desire to escape the burden of authorship or transfer it onto the willing members of the audience who would (whether he liked it or not) continue to create the text(s) literally in his name. What is more, attempts to pluralize Salinger’s authorship by creating in \textit{his name}, as Gish and Colting did, may be an indication that this is not particularly difficult to do since authorship is plural to begin

\(^6\) Lish actively solicited new work from Salinger before giving up and producing it himself (Lish, \textit{A Fool for Salinger} 409).
with. Examples such as the new Bond novel that will not be written by Ian Flemming, or Star Wars novels, or a new authorized (though not authorized by the author) Sherlock Holmes novel that is to be written by Anthony Horowitz, similarly suggest that literary authorship should not be seen as a province of a solitary individual, but that each example of authorship involves participants who are either singled out and (mis)named, or left anonymous.

**CONRAD AND FORD – FROM SINGULAR TO PLURAL AND BACK**

However, the majority of (nominally singular) authors choose to appear in public often enough to assume the larger (or the most visible) part of responsibility, especially if they are to represent texts that are considered successful. Yet it is in cases where the nominal authorship is divided that the maneuverings to evade or lessen the authorial responsibility fully come into view, and particularly in cases of less successful texts where there is certainly an added pressure to minimize one’s responsibility for the text. In both categories, the creative relationship of Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford is particularly illustrative, especially since simultaneously with this relationship both partners more or less solidified into singular literary giants.

To be sure, in their collaboration Conrad and Ford are not habitually recognized as giants, but are rather seen as juvenile delinquents: “Just as two boys banded together exhibit far greater daring than each one alone—for the presence of an accomplice serves to dilute and divide the sense of guilt—so apparently did the spiritual union of these two inhibited men lend to Conrad, at least, a certain boldness in his willingness to search his inner self” (Bernard C. Meyer, *Joseph Conrad: A Psychoanalytic Biography* qtd. in
Along with “the sense of guilt,” collaboration also effectively “dilute[s] and divide[s]” responsibility—Conrad and Ford published three jointly authored works, and although they must have enjoyed the process, they publicly handled these novels as literary hot potatoes, almost as if intentionally bent on confusing the critics who would prefer a clean autopsy report of their creative relationship.

The last of the three, *The Nature of a Crime* was originally published in 1909, in the April and May issues of *The English Review*, under the (singular and fictional) name of Baron Ignatz von Aschendorf (Delbanco 118-119). The use of a singular (and exaggeratedly foreign) pseudonym might not seem particularly remarkable, if it were not for the fact that by 1909 Conrad and Ford had already published two openly collaborative novels, which were, and hence the baronial mask, not even remotely successful enough to elevate overt collaboration to the status of a respectable mode of authorship. Even fifteen years later, prefacing the US Doubleday, Page & Co. edition, Conrad could not stop apologizing, and relieving himself from responsibility for *The Nature of a Crime* (*TNoaC*). For him, this novella was “but a fragment of something else that might have been—of a mere intention” (*TNoaC* vi). Along with expressing contrition for the work, Conrad begged to be excused for ever attempting literary collaboration: “…the most fantastic of all… is that we two who had so often discussed soberly the limits and methods of literary composition should have believed for a moment that a piece of work in the nature of an analytical confession… could have been developed and achieved in collaboration!” (*TNoaC* vi-vii). From the reader’s point of view there can hardly be a less appealing invitation: come read something that is not what it is supposed to be, created in a manner in which is it not supposed to be created.
In terms of responsibility, Ford’s account of his collaboration with Conrad also reads very much like an apology: he and Conrad did something for their own pleasure, and it somehow accidentally escaped into public view. What Ford is particularly aware and afraid of is the possibility of some future scholar dissecting the collaboration in order to determine each collaborator’s respective contribution, and in the process “maul at least one of [their] memories” (TNoaC xi). This fear, fed by what seems to be the image or the idea of a (more) proper type of authorship, belies almost every Conrad’s or Ford’s reference to their collaboration: there are numerable instances where either of the two tries to disambiguate and divide authorial responsibilities for either chapters or sections of text, or particular stylistic features (TNoaC xiv). The conclusion is that, although on one hand Conrad and Ford are not ashamed of their shared authorship, they are nevertheless not particularly proud of it, and would like to distribute the responsibility (or the blame) for it very precisely.

In the case of Romance, their most time-consuming project, this anxiety reaches an absurd level when Conrad attempts to offer the complete accounting of the novel:

First Part yours; Second Part, mainly yours, with a little by me on points of seamanship and suchlike small matters; Third Part, about 60 per cent mine with important touches by you; Fourth Part, mine with here and there an important sentence by you; Fifth Part practically all yours, including the famous sentence at which we both exclaimed: ‘This is Genius,’ (Do you remember what it is?) with perhaps half a dozen lines by me…

(TNoaC 95)

The futility of Conrad’s bookkeeping, and with that the relativity of authorship, became apparent when in the first edition of The Nature of a Crime by Doubleday, Page & Co.,
the authorship of particular parts of *Romance* was switched between Conrad and Ford due to a proofreading error. In the British edition Conrad’s contribution was set in Roman type and Ford’s in italics, but in the US edition the words “italics” and “Roman type” were switched, so that the text was misattributed. Of course, for a reader this matter is of very little (if any) significance whatsoever. And in reality, the issue of singular authorship of particular fragments of text is indeed irrelevant, the only relevant thing being the collaborative effort that produced this novel. Nevertheless, as the anonymous writer of a literary note that appeared in *New York Times* concluded: “The error will be rectified in the new edition” (“Books and Authors.” *New York Times*. 27 Feb. 1927: BR12.).

Thus, though it may be hard to detect so from the product itself, Conrad and Ford’s collaboration on *Romance* was marked by strong commitment. What is more, their ambition indicates that even as collaborators they were aware of the wider authorial responsibility. In *Romance*, one of their goals is the reinforcement or promotion of national identity—Englishness as such becomes a product of collaboration, both literary and social, although as presented by Conrad and Ford it is maintained and upheld by extraordinary individuals, their hero John Kemp being one of them (*Romance* 120). On the other hand, one of the potential clues to authors’ anxiety regarding the collaboration might be read from their use of the character El Demonio, a composite identity created by the novel’s main villain, an identity assumed by a number of other characters. Lesser characters, like Manuel del Popolo and Tomas Castro, both notably non-British, fight over the role (and the name) of El Demonio—for them impersonating notoriety is quite sufficient and not the least shameful. However, when offered, John Kemp refuses with
indignation to assume the same identity, as if to indicate that no proper hero of a
romance, or indeed any literary work, would stoop so low as to join in any sort of
collective. What is more, by juxtaposing staunch individualism of John Kemp to the
collective evil of El Demonio, Conrad and Ford again testify to the paradox of
collaboration—the fact that it takes a collaboration in order to maintain singular
individuality (Romance 96-97, 124), which in the context of this chapter also means that
it takes more than one person to maintain a singular name once that name is no longer
(only) a name of a person but a name of an author.

A case in point: in the US, in the Collected Works of Joseph Conrad both The
Inheritors and Romance were, by the decision of the publisher, attributed exclusively to
Conrad, who was, thus, as a consequence of market conditions (Ford apparently not being
a ‘hot’ enough literary commodity in the States), made to bear full (nominal) authorial
responsibility for otherwise overtly collaborative texts. On one hand this proves that even
such ‘inferior’ works7 can serve to support the oeuvre of a singular, solitary author, as
well as to raise the retail price of the product by adding volumes to the set (Ford 142-
143). But, on the other hand, it only reflected the general opinion that the result of a
collaboration between one recognized literary figure and an, arguably, obscure one, the
credit should go to the former, and if possible should not be shared. Ford was,
unfortunately, used to such treatment; after all, one contemporary even intimated that he
had paid Conrad for the privilege of collaborating with him (Ford 150). Of all the
published joint works, Ford disliked The Inheritors rather intensely, possibly because he
wrote most of the novel. Yet, considering the fact that of the novel’s seventy five
thousand words only a thousand or so were contributed by Conrad it can be concluded

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7 Inferior in respect to his masterpieces, but also due to the fact that they were products of collaboration.
that a collaboration is not defined by the quantity of each partner’s input but by the very fact of the plurality of input (Ford 118, 134). Thus, in case of *The Inheritors*, Ford was reluctant to claim full, exclusive nominal responsibility for the novel, and Conrad did not mind adding his name to share, be it blame or fame. Paradoxically, but fully in accord with the practice of promoting the more famous collaborator into a solitary author, contemporary reviewers chose to ignore Ford altogether, though he was apparently the primary writer of *The Inheritors*, as well as its originator or inventor, which, in terms of the traditional practice, made him the best candidate for the novel’s singular authorship. In the very announcement of *The Inheritors*, Conrad was labeled as “a very difficult writer with whom to collaborate, for his methods and style are so peculiarly his own that it is hard to see how he could combine his forces with any other writer.” In the same breath, William L. Alden, *New York Times* London correspondent prophesized that the book would be “one of the most vivid and powerful that Mr. Conrad, or, for that matter, any other man has yet written” (Alden BR16), completely disregarding the fact that it was not written by any one man, or Conrad alone. As a consequence, by completely omitting Ford’s name, the reviewers piled all the praise (and responsibility) on Conrad, and, consequently, all the blame on collaboration as a mode of creativity.

Surely, nominally singular authorship is usually not challenged in such blatant and disrespectful manner, which means that authors writing under one name do not have to publicly assert their rights and responsibilities—a name on the cover of the book will most often suffice. However, provoked by *The New York Times*’ review of *The Inheritors*, Conrad was forced to write a letter vigorously protesting that: “The book is emphatically an experiment in collaboration; but only the first paragraph of the review
mentions ‘the authors’ in the plural—afterward it seems as if Mr. Conrad alone were credited with the qualities of style and conception detected by the friendly glance of the critic.” In fact, Conrad finds it necessary to emphasize that *The Inheritors* are “only an extravagant story—and it is an experiment… The extravagance of its form is meant to point out forcibly the materialistic exaggeration of individualism, whose unscrupulous efficiency it is the temper of the time to worship” (*NYT*, August 24, 1901, BR15). If Conrad’s position is reverse-engineered from this statement, one could conclude that he found collaboration to be a sort of ‘scrupulous inefficiency,’ a view stemming no doubt from his disappointment over years wasted on *Romance*, wasted, that is, in the sense of material returns. To make matters even worse, Conrad was forced to assume a disproportionately greater part of responsibility for *The Inheritors*, a novel to which he contributed ‘only’ a thousand words, simply by being named by the critics as its sole author, confirming again that the author’s name implies a much heavier burden than what a single person could be expected to carry.

Another peculiar aspect of Conrad and Ford’s collaboration is the fact that the two managed to produce a modest collaborative oeuvre along with two singular ones. Yet they chose not to give that collaborative, “third person who is writing” (Conrad in Ford 45) a single name, a single pseudonym. Each of them having a more or less successful individual career, such a pseudonym would be a reasonable option. Still, only *The Nature of a Crime* carried for a while the name of Baron Ignatz von Aschendorf, and this in a periodical Ford himself had founded. But when the novella appeared in the book form, so appeared both authors’ names on the title page, in spite the fact that both of them had some reservations regarding the work’s quality. In fact, rather than accompanied with
laudatory blurbs or introductions, the volume’s two prefaces leave the readers doubting the merit of what they are about to read. There are surely numerous explanations for this particular distribution of names, but the more obvious one is that Conrad and Ford needed no pseudonyms for the simple reason that they each already wrote under a pseudonym. Conrad, a self-fashioned Briton, was nevertheless born a Pole—Józef Konrad Nałęcz Korzeniowski—and Ford evolved from Ford Herman Hueffer, through Ford Madox Hueffer, and into Ford Madox Ford, gradually concealing his German heritage. Consequently, there was no need to assume another name since their respective individual pennames were to a degree already assumed. True, Conrad and Ford of The Nature of a Crime, The Inheritors, and Romance are not Conrad of Heart of Darkness, Lord Jim, or Nostromo, and Ford of Good Soldier or Parade’s End. Yet when looking into, for example, the conditions of writing of Nostromo one could claim that even Conrad of Nostromo is not (only) Conrad of Nostromo. The fact is that Ford contributed a chapter to this novel, itself having at least some remote origin in Romance, when Conrad’s illness threatened to disrupt the novel’s serialization: “I… simply wrote enough from time to time to keep the presses going—a job that presented no great difficulties to me”—a fact Conrad was eager to conceal, though Nostromo is by some considered a better novel because and not despite Ford’s contribution (Delbanco 106). In light of this, considering how a name can at one instance denote genius, and at another instance mediocrity, or how a name never refers to a fixed identity but to an identity that is derived from the text itself, the conclusion might be that a name used to identify the author, regardless of how many persons inhabit it, is always (only) a pseudonym. After all, in the example of Nostromo, ‘Joseph Conrad’ can be seen as a pseudonym for Joseph
Conrad and Ford Madox Ford, at least in the measure in which Ford contributed to the novel. Of course, one could argue that Ford’s contribution was such that it does not warrant nominal authorship—only a chapter. However, Conrad contributed to *The Inheritors* only a thousand words (roughly an equivalent of a chapter), which would mean, in the context of that novel, that ‘Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford’ is actually a pseudonym for Ford Madox Ford. In either case, the name(s) supplied as the name(s) or the author(s) do(es) not reflect *the number* of persons directly responsible for respective texts, which could at least warrant an attempt to ‘read’ authors’ names differently, as sings of broader responsibility for a text.

**PSEUDONYM—AN ESCAPE FROM RESPONSIBILITY**

Unfortunately, even in clear cases of collaboration, when it comes to naming the authors, the singular pseudonym is often a preferred option. What is more, as in the case of Nikoo and James McGoldrick, some collaborators never even think of a plural byline as a potential alternative: “Consider, for example, *whose* name is going on the book. Your name? Your partner’s name? Will you use a pseudonym? And who has the right to the pseudonym?” (McGoldrick & McGoldrick 70). In other words, the writers of a handbook on collaboration, *Marriage of Minds: Collaborative Fiction Writing*, suggest that potential collaborators should opt for a “name,” singular, rather than a joint byline (‘names’), which implies that for the McGoldricks, the bulk of genre collaborators, but also for Dorris and Erdrich⁸, collaboration implies certain authorial mimicry: when it comes to presentation of collaboration, an appearance of solitary effort is advised. The

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⁸ Initially, Dorris and Erdrich shared a pseudonym, Milou North, and later they used their individual names as singular pseudonyms of a sort (if their claims that each of the texts published under only his or only her name was a product of collaboration are taken into account).
result is that the readers have no qualms about the singularity of the author of the McGoldricks’ novels simply because she is identified as one May McGoldrick. And “[n]o one captures the magic and romance of the British Isles like May McGoldrick,” says Miranda Jarrett (The Firebrand), and she should know, especially since “she has written more than thirty bestselling historical romances for Harlequin and for Pocket Books” (http://susanhollowayscott.com/books/ mirandajarrett.htm). Of course, it should be noted that although there are more than three and a half million copies of Jarret’s books, she has not earned a penny writing them—same as May McGoldrick, Miranda herself is a fiction, a penname of Susan Holloway Scott, yet this information can be found only in the fine print of particular novels’ copyright notices. And as for the McGoldricks, the management of identities and bylines gets even more complicated considering that Nikoo and James are also Nicole Cody. They are Jan Coffey too. But May is neither Nicole, nor Jan. Or is she?

To be sure, the practice of a writer producing under multiple pseudonyms is not that rare—along with some of the most famous examples: Kierkegaard, Simenon, Pessoa, one could think of, for example, Benjamin Franklin, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Dean Koonz or Marijane Meaker. What is more, there is hardly a writer who has not produced at least some writing under a pseudonym. But Paul Edmonds, Noel Gardner, James Hall, Keith Hammond, Hudson Hastings, Robert O. Kenyon, C.H. Liddell, K.H. Maepen, Scott Morgan, and Woodrow Wilson Smith are all singular pseudonyms of Catherine Lucille Moore and Henry Kuttner (Room 335), which leads us to a conclusion that if an average pair of literary collaborators has ten opportunities to choose their pen name(s), in ten out of ten instances they will go for the singular one. This, of course, is somewhat of an
exaggeration, but if someone would actually list all collaborations in literature, and especially in genre literature, it would not be the least bit surprising to find that the majority of them are concealed by singular pseudonyms.

In the case of a writer supplying his/her own name as a name of the author it may be less obvious where the plurality can be discovered. Hence, it is necessary to imagine authorship as including a broad spectrum of activities, not all of which are performed by the (primary) writer or the nominal author. However, if a writer opts for a pseudonym, s/he effectively creates a plurality (granted, a symbolical one) where the total sum of authorial responsibility is distributed over multiple subjects. In the case of the McGoldricks, there are at least five subjects involved in their complex distribution of responsibility (Nikoo, James, May, Nicole, and Jan). Nikoo and James have assumed nominal responsibility only for their guide to collaborative writing, *Marriage of Minds: Collaborative Fiction Writing*. May McGoldrick is (again nominally) responsible for their historical romances, and is hence by far the most prolific of the bunch. Nicole has only one title to her name, *Love and Mayhem*, arguably even more romantic than any of those under May’s name. And Jan is the author of a series of science thrillers. Yet out of five authors there are only two writers—the very need for additional identities could suggests there is more responsibility one or two can (or care to) handle, especially if they are attempting to establish themselves in a number of not necessarily compatible genres.

Here, a small news article from London *Times* may serve to illustrate to what a degree can an author’s name be an unreliable evidence of the true amount of authorial responsibility, as well as an unequivocal evidence that such responsibility as a rule involves numerous individuals:
WHAT COLLABORATION MEANS.

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PART AUTHOR’S RIGHT TO NAME
(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

PARIS, MARCH 8.

A curious history of literary collaboration has just had its echo in the Courts.

In 1885 a new novelist appeared, one Charles Ambo. Ambo did not exist. His name was but a punning name that covered the identity of two collaborators, Charles Vincent and Charles Causse. Next year, the authors, dissatisfied with their nom de guerre, changed it to Pierre Maelstrom, and later they made still another change, and for many years after that the pair produced successful novels under the name of Pierre Mael. They made an agreement that the survivor should have the sole right to the use of the name.

Nevertheless the son of Causse, some years after his father’s death in 1904, began to publish novels, using the name of Pierre Mael. Vincent protested, first of all because he had been legally wronged, but also because impudence had been added to injury as—so he claimed—Causse’s literary part in the collaboration had been small. In fact, Vincent contended that the writing of the novels had been his part of the work and the placing of them Causse’s. The law has upheld Vincent’s view by granting him an injunction against the son of Charles Causse, prohibiting him from the use of the name of Pierre Mael, and also by ordering him to pay 12,000f. (£240) damages.

(“What Collaboration Means” 11)

Irrelevant as it may seem from a historical perspective, since its protagonists are now long gone and forgotten, the court finale of the battle for the name of Pierre Mael serves well in pointing out a number of significant characteristics of nominal authorship.
Reduced to its basic elements, here are three distinct persons (Charles Vincent, Charles Causse, and Causse’s son), who wrote both collaboratively and alone under three, more or less, distinct names (Charles Ambo, Pierre Maelstrom, and Pierre Mael) none of which was the name of any of three writers. On one hand, in this case the authorial (id)entity exhibited a tendency to transform, proving to be an unstable, malleable subject, yet the individuals whom it was supposed to represent or conceal, proved to be as malleable, suggesting that a particular author’s name does not need at all times to refer to one and the same person.

When accounting for her and Michael Dorris’ early singular pseudonym, Milou North, Louise Erdrich substitutes the role of the writer for that of a reader: “It’s mysterious. You really think that’s probably a female, but you don’t know. It’s one person. I think that when readers read a story they want to read one by one person” (Chavkin & Chavkin 37). On one hand this suggests that the text itself is evaluated by the readers even before they fully interact with it based on the number suggested by the name(s) of the author(s), and that the readers have some sort of inherent preference for texts that appear to be written by solitary individuals. But even more importantly, Erdrich implies that one becomes an author not by authoring a text but by being one, or more precisely not by (only) participating in the writing of a text, but by proclaiming one’s (or two’s) singularity. In terms of collaborative authorship, although plurality is pejoratively seen as manifesting itself in anonymity (with the individual supposedly getting lost in the mass), singularity almost ensures it, since a singular byline necessarily leaves some or (in case of a singular pseudonym) all of text’s nominal authors unnamed.
For participants in collaborative authorship, *singular* pseudonyms are, if not a requirement (often less than subtly insisted upon by publishers), then certainly a safer, non-confrontational option. As Bette London suggests, “[c]ollaborative authors… often deliberately choose a singular (often composite) signature to protect their writing arrangements from public scrutiny—even public ridicule” (London 18). Of course, one may only speculate whether writing from such a seemingly sheltered position only exaggerates the necessity for protection, making it impossible for collaboratively produced works to ever compete in the arena of ‘great’ authorship. In this sense, pseudonyms clearly produce effective authorial anonymity (with the ‘true’ identity of the author hidden as well as the ‘true’ number of authors hidden); they offer to the public nothing but the ready-made image of singularity. In the case of Michael Dorris and Louise Erdrich, for example, their names were “interchangeable… [i]n some ways” (Chavkin & Chavkin 29). The two published only one novel under both their names, yet claimed to have collaborated on almost all work created prior to Dorris’ death. Thus, in a way, each of their names as a singular byline functioned as a sort of a pseudonym (again, singularity denoting plurality)—with Erdrich hiding behind Dorris’ name and vice versa—all in an attempt to, again, relieve the burden of authorship, in their case by blurring the difference between singular and plural authorship.

With pseudonyms the norm appears to be that they are singular. One rare instance of a plural, or in this particular case dual pseudonym is used to identify the authorship of *The Outward Urge* (1959), a science fiction novel by John Wyndham & Lucas Parkes. In this collaboration, Wyndham is the primary writer, while Parkes “confined himself to supplying technical advice in connexion with space travel” (from a biographical note of
the 1962 Penguin edition, qtd. in Drake, Luigi-Bob, ed. *Collaborative Writing*. Cleveland: Burning Press, 1990. pg. 27). However, Lucas Parkes itself is a pseudonym, a pseudonym for John Wyndham to boot, and was called in to provide assistance since the publisher (Ballantine) found that this particular novel was “not your usual Wyndham style” (http://archives.liv.ac.uk/ead/html/gb141wyndham-p5.shtml#Wyndham11), again suggesting that authorship is a construct supported by numerous subjects. Aside from writing under the name of Lucas Parkes, Wyndham had at his disposal four more pseudonyms (used, no doubt, whenever a discrepancy in style occurred): John Beynon, Wyndham Parkes, John Beynon Harris and Johnson Harris, all of them derivations of his full name—John Wyndham Parkes Lucas Beynon Harris (http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A5718486). Needless to say, most of his pseudonyms were deployed one at a time, however, in the case of *The Outward Urge* the nominal authorial responsibility was divided among two ‘authors’ to account for the deviation in style that would otherwise compromise the solitary authorship of ‘John Wyndham’s’ other texts.

This is, however, a rather uncommon occurrence—when it comes to naming the author, plurality is almost never used to hide singularity, whereas, a good number of literary collaborators (if not even a majority) assume the nominal appearance of singular authorship. Hence, it surprises not the least when Holly Laird finds in “The Coauthored Pseudonym,” her contribution to *The Faces of Anonymity*, that “[a]mong the approximately 100 women coauthors in Alice Kahler Marshall’s list of 2,650 pen names from 1600 to 1984, none is canonical and the vast majority are utterly forgotten. This may not be accidental. Coauthorship stands in a vexed relation to our ideas about authorship, giving the lie both to the Romantic myth of solitary genius and to the
postmodern myth of the author’s death” (Griffin 193). Some, of course, might argue that the very mode of authorship condemned these writers to anonymity, since collaboration is often seen as the refuge of inferior or fledgling writers, yet chances are that almost all of them have opted for singular pseudonyms, and in that precise sense have opted for a type of anonymity Laird refers to (“none… canonical and the vast majority are utterly forgotten”). Choosing a singular pseudonym, these collaborators have effectively reduced themselves in number, have created a disconnect that does not occur when a solitary writer opts for a singular penname. In other words, two (or more) persons were replaced by a singular (imaginary or even fake) identity. By doing so they have effectively disqualified themselves from ever being considered ‘proper’ authors since in order to be recognized, an author must assume the fullest possible responsibility and be ‘properly’ named, which in terms of literary authorship most often means one author per book, and one name per author. In other words, a ‘proper’ author must at least appear to follow the norm of singularity—which is what most writers do by choosing a pen name. However, in cases when collaborators choose singular pen names, it is not only that their respective identities are rendered invisible (or concealed) but it is also their plurality, their number that disappears.

BORGES AND BIOY-CASARES—COLLABORATION AS AN ESCAPE FROM BUT ALSO EXAGGERATION OF RESPONSIBILITY

However, the advantage of looking into collaborative examples is that the shifts in authorial responsibility are more apparent. Among those, the collaboration of Jorge Luis

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9 Of course, there is no telling what would literary history look like if the majority of collaborators had insisted on plural names and even plural pseudonyms or, in other words, if they had chosen to assume a greater nominal authorial responsibility.
Borges and Adolfo Bioy-Casares is particularly illustrative since it is not only an example of authorship, but it also confronts the issue of authorship. Among their co-authored works is *Six Problems for Don Isidro Parodi*, a collection of satirical pseudo-crime stories that first appeared under the pseudonym, H. Bustos Domecq (their other pseudonym was Benito Suárez Lynch). Written in, as one can find on the front flap of the 1981 E.P. Dutton edition dust jacket, “not quite the style of either of the collaborators” (*Six Problems*), this short volume is truly a knot of allusions to the issue of authorship exemplifying the entire complexity of literary authorship in which Borges and Bioy-Casares examine the notion of authorial singularity to discover that it (often) conceals a plurality of active subjects.

In the stories, six criminal cases are solved by the eponymous Isidro Parodi, while he himself is incarcerated—he is able to come up with his solutions based on nothing but what his visitors recount, which makes his method of detection a rather collaborative one, despite the fact that he is formally cut off from the rest of the world in the manner of a Romantic genius. Next, the foreword to the volume is written by one Gervasio Montenegro, another fictional construct, who publicly claims authorship of Parodi’s solutions to puzzles, and relegates Parodi to the role of his collaborator (*Six Problems* 55, 56). This foreword is further footnoted by H. Bustos Domecq himself (*Six Problems* 7), whose critical treatment of the collection is a somewhat devious way of asserting his ownership of the text. What is more, one of the stories, “Tai An’s Long Search,” is a version of Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Purloined Letter.” Finally, Parodi’s authorship is additionally challenged by yet another character, Achilles Molinari (*Six Problems* 37). The result of so many references, so many names dropped into the cauldron of authorship
is in fact liberating, for the text, as well as the reader (and the writers, presumably), simply because too many names place an additional emphasis on the text, the true nexus of communication—authors are rendered anonymous, or at least less relevant, or prominent, due to the fact that there is more than one of them. Borges, Bioy-Casares, Bustos Domecq (both as a singular pseudonym and a character), Parodi, Montenegro, Poe, and Molinari—there are at least seven pretenders to the throne of authorship, though some of them could be counted twice, identifiable simply because they are named. This is the main characteristic of *Six Problems* and any other literary work: it simply abounds with named subjects (pretenders to the ‘throne’ of authorship) and in this way accentuates the main features of collaborative authorship, presents all authorship as (at least potential) collaboration, and even mocks the monumental heroism of the supposedly solitary authorship. Conventionally, in cases of nominally singular authorship, only one person gets to be named as the author, with others assuming more or less anonymous roles of editors, helpers, translators, or readers. And even in the case of *Six Problems* there is a host of subjects that remain unnamed, which only implies that any fixed number of authors or participants in the process of authorship only denotes an even greater plurality.

The significance of the name attached to a particular literary work is further questioned by Borges and Bioy-Casares in “Homage to César Paladín” from *Chronicles of Bustos Domecq*\(^\text{10}\). In this story, an ambitious author, rather than constructing new texts, finds he is able to best articulate his artistic urges through plagiarism. Thus, he, in the manner of the (more) notorious Pierre Menard, “Author of the *Quixote,*” produces works such as *The Hound of the Baskervilles, Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and the *De divinatione* “[in Latin]” (*Chronicles of Bustos Domecq* 21):

\(^{10}\) The same H. Bustos Domeq who tried to appropriate *Six Problems for Don Isidro Parodi.*
He annexed, so to speak, a complete opus, Herrera y Reissig’s *The Abandoned Parks*… personally, he preferred *The Twilights of the Garden* by the Argentine poet Lugones, but he did not consider himself worthy of assimilating them; instead, he perceived that Herrera’s book fell comfortably within his range at that time, inasmuch as in Herrera’s pages he found a full expression of himself. Paladión granted the book his name and sent it on to the printer, neither adding nor omitting a single comma—a rule to which he remained ever after steadfast.

(Chronicles of Bustos Domecq 22)

Interestingly, this type of appropriation points to the symbolic function of the name of the author—the fact that one name can be stripped from a particular text and replaced by another, without any detrimental effects to the text itself, indicates that the name of the author serves merely to prove that someone has indeed assumed responsibility for that text. Regardless of whether this responsibility is assumed in the form of writing of the text or plagiarizing it, the name of the author that accompanies it is a symbolic gesture or, to paraphrase Foucault, a finger pointed at everyone. In this particular example, the original author can be seen as anonymous because his name is stripped from the new text, and replaced by the name of the ‘appropriator,’ who in turn becomes anonymous simply by associating himself with the text in the creation of which he did not participate. The fine art of blatant plagiarism is prohibited by law that places literary work under the category of private, commercial property, yet if plagiarism is unacceptable because it disrupts direct connection between a literary work and its (chief) producer, then the idea of nominally singular authorship should be equally unacceptable since it disrupts the direct connection between a literary work and the greater (or the greatest possible) number of those who participated in its production and dissemination.
In “What Happened to the Author?” Niels Buch-Jepsen refers to Jorge Luis Borges remembering that Paul Valéry has at one point…

… proposed a literary history without even a single authorname. But looking back at modernism we far from perceive an ecumenism of writers contributing to a vast and anonymous literary project… On the contrary, we are confronted with a succession of ‘great’ authors… Strikingly, a cult of the author has evolved from the period of impersonal literature.

(Buch-Jepsen 83)

This is surely one perspective on the singular figure of the author, but considering the entire history of literature, as well as the amount of new literature produced each year, anonymity rather than celebrity (taken here, again, as exaggerated namedness\textsuperscript{11}) seems to be the norm since from that vast number only a small percentage of authors can claim to have cracked the ceiling of namelessness, and in truth none have broken it, for the name that echoes through the ages is only that, an echo—once mythologized and forcefully singularized, this name no longer informs about the collaborative conditions of authorship. In other words, a name of the author or, consequently, a pseudonym, has the same effect as the professed authorial impersonality of modernism in that it “becomes another mask that both hides and reveals the authors” (Buch-Jepsen 84)—though it is supposed to identify the author, it effectively hides all who participate in the production of a particular text.

\textsuperscript{11} If anonymity would be invisibility (or the state of having no name, or not being named), then celebrity would be enhanced visibility (the state of being named too often).
This is consistent to what Peggy Kamuf refers to as the “pseudoanonymous” regime of the text’s signature. Between the law of the proper name and the space of reading, the author designated by the signature is ‘there as anonymous party.’ The author is positioned by a certain effaceability of his/her name with the regard to the text it signs” (Kamuf 66). In terms of, for example, literature as art, a text merely needs to include the name of the author in order to function (anonymous texts are mostly considered only if they belong to a great enough antiquity)—any name\(^\text{12}\) will do, preferably a singular one. In this sense, the anonymity of authorship, whether it be actual, or a result of author shirking his or her responsibilities by seeking refuge in a pseudonym or exaggerated solitude, necessarily translates into plurality. If authorship is perceived in terms of wide collaboration of all participants in the system of literature, it is obvious that the vast majority of them remain anonymous, and are quite satisfied with that state (surely, translators, and even cover designers receive nominal credit, but the names of editors are often omitted, and readers, as the most numerous participants in the literary exchange are as a rule nameless). Of course, here it would be helpful that the term ‘author’ be broadened enough to accommodate all participants in the literary exchange. In this context, an author would be anyone who interacts with the text—any ‘user’ of literature, any literary subject, any individual who assumes any degree of responsibility for that text and the system of literature as a whole. Consequently, this would mean that there is no exclusivity of literary authorship, and that a name (any name) that accompanies a particular text only indicates that there are indeed others with whom that text (and literature) are shared.

\(^{12}\) Indeed, Kamuf’s pseudoanonymity could be seen as a sort of ‘anynamedness’—where the name merely fulfills a textual function (functions as a part of the text), while the one who is being named remains more or less anonymous (apart from that textual, symbolic function, his full or true identity is largely irrelevant).
Authors, to an extent, are quite at peace with their anonymity, especially since even the most famous ones spend the largest part of their lives relatively unknown, with fame reaching them fairly late, if not posthumously. Some, who have come to taste it a bit sooner or have been far too exposed to it, find that it is unappealing and even undermining the very ability that earned them celebrity. Salinger, for example, expressed his “rather subversive opinion… that a writer's feelings of anonymity-obscurity are the second most valuable property on loan to him during his working years” (“People.” *Time.* 4 Aug. 1961:?), while John Crowe Ransom claimed that “[a]nonymity, of some real if not literal sort, is a condition of poetry… A good poem, even if it is signed with a full and well-known name, intends as a work of art to lose the identity of the author” (qtd. in Bennett 68). For Ransom, this anonymity as “a condition” liberates the text—and, arguably, opens it up to potential collaboration, possibly even the type of collaboration that is nowadays not allowed by copyright laws, the type of collaboration attempted by, for example, Fredrik Colting, a.k.a. John David California. For Salinger, anonymity is the preferred environment for literary creation—as such it can be compared to solitude, to a state of being-left-alone, a state he, no doubt, wished to recreate. But this state of being-left-alone does not necessarily mean no contact with other—rather it is a state in which a person, a writer is not forced to communicate with others as an author, or even the author. In this sense, anonymity is not a synonym for solitude; quite the contrary, anonymity as such frees up space to create outside of the imperative of solitude, allows a fuller type of collaboration since it functions as an equalizing, or liberating factor, with each member of a collaborative team being as anonymous as the other, which might be seen as a reason
why the group behind, for example, Invisible Seattle chose to remain hidden behind a collective name, and consequently remain anonymous.

This also suggests that every writer is at least in part an author, but also that all authors are only part-authors, since no name designating the author can stretch enough to include all those participating in the production of a particular text. Literature only appears to be dominated by examples of singular genius if observed from a historical vantage point. Yet these trees obscure the view of the forest. Surely, Foucault “can easily imagine a culture where discourse would circulate without any need for an author. Discourses, whatever their status, form, and value, and regardless of our manner of handling them, would perform in a pervasive anonymity” (Foucault 138). The main reason why this “culture” is so “easily imagine[d]” is that the “pervasive anonymity” is and was a constant condition of culture, where the majority of those who participate in it never even perform roles that would require them to be named. At any moment in history, literature was able to exist only because of the efforts of the innumerable unnamed, and it is their efforts that earn them the right to be considered participants in the literary authorship. Hence, if one looks closer at Foucault’s anonymous subject one can discover that it is plural, that a name no longer carries any weight because it does not correspond to the number of those whom it is supposed to represent.

**CONCLUSION**

Exactly because it concerns not only particular individuals but an entire host of participants in the literary exchange, the issue of naming authors is essentially an ethical one in the sense that any name implies moral responsibility for the continuation of
literary exchange perpetuated by each particular text. According to Seán Burke, “in the act of publication, the writer, like any ethical agent, implicitly signs a contract with society, and accepts the possibility that a tribunal may one day assemble around the work” (The Ethics of Writing 21). Here the name is inextricably tied to the responsibility: no literary work comes without a certain level of responsibility attached, and the most laconic and in some cases the most draconian way to deal with this responsibility is to identify it with a single person. The authors are given a number of devices to avoid or lessen that responsibility—pseudonyms being the most efficient one—but actual anonymity seems to be no longer an option, regardless of what Foucault had imagined. For Burke:

> In a world of textual anonymity, the author would be protected from the effects of the text and the text protected from the effects of its author’s life. Authors would not have been persecuted or denied expression by oppressive regimes; female author would not have felt impelled to adopt male pseudonyms in order to gain a respectful audience. However, in a society in which it mattered nothing who is speaking, the author could sign his or her text without risk. Anonymity is not a value in itself but depends upon context: one and the same person might be in favor of anonymity in the case of a text like the *Satanic Verses* whilst being righteously concerned to identify the author of *Mein Kampf*.

(The Ethics of Writing 20)

This “risk” that Burke speaks of is that basic authorial responsibility, which is also synonymous to what Wayne Koestenbaum identifies as “the blame of authorship,” finding that “[c]ollaborators share the blame of authorship; anonymous publication disperses blame entirely” (Koestenbaum 165). While the notion of literary authorship as collaboration liberates the individual from shouldering the entire burden of authorship,
the “risk,” the “blame,” or the responsibility is not lost, or at least it should not be lost, but is only evenly divided among all who interact with a particular text. But the essence of what Burke claims is that anonymity cannot be total, the name as such, whether singular or plural, is a sign of responsibility, or as sign of personal or individual responsibility that does not stop with those who are named but belongs with all those who interact with a particular text.

Along these lines one can understand Bertold Brecht’s statement: “When you name yourself, you always name another” (from Mann ist Mann, qtd. in Toril Moi’s Sexual/Textual Politics 160), to indicate the very nature of the name of the author that has been discussed here. It may constitute somewhat of a paradox: this other (or Brecht’s “another”) is at the same time both anonymous (since the self, “yourself” is named), but is also implied, suggested, denoted by the name of the self; a ‘self’ who is both named, but also anonymous since the name that refers to is no longer proper, private name, but a symbol for otherness or plurality. In this context, every singular name, every pseudonym, designates a certain anonymity—in fact a pseudonym can be seen as a type of anonymity, since it allows the writer(s) of a particular text to separate themselves from his/her (or their) creation, allows them to choose freely the level of responsibility they will assume, allows both them and their work a level of autonomy. Consequently, Foucault’s claim that “[l]iterary anonymity was of interest only as a puzzle to be solved as, in our day, literary works are totally dominated by the sovereignty of the author” (Foucault 126), is only partially true; or better yet, it is true only if the ways in which authorship is imagined are limited by the nominal singularity of the author. However, if the name supplied as the name of the author is taken as an indication that a number of human
beings participated (and are invited to further participate) in the creation of a particular text, then the relative anonymity of literary labor is no longer a puzzle, but one of the conditions of authorship perceived as collaboration.
Text as the Other

Probably the single biggest obstacle to imagining authorship as any sort of (or degree of) collaboration lies in the fact that the majority of activities that account for authorship are performed by solitary individuals who are often in limited (or no) direct contact with one another. In other words, although according to Jerome McGann “reading, like writing, and speaking, is a type of communicative exchange” (*The Textual Condition* 119), there is only a certain degree of concurrence or collusion, or simple straightforward communication between all those individuals who participate in the process of authorship, that is the process that includes the composition, publication, and discourse that is the result of a particular text. This lack of direct, person-to-person communication seemingly suggests that the level of collaboration in literary authorship cannot be as high as we have claimed it to be in previous chapters. This is of course true only if collaboration is defined as those examples of literary creativity that are overtly presented as such. On one hand, during the stage of composition, the actual ‘writing,’ most writers enter into an exclusive relationship with the text, even when participating in an openly collaborative literary enterprise, and it is this seemingly exclusive relationship of a solitary writer with a text that is at the root of the notion of singular authorship and as well as the notion of texts controlled by (most often) individual authors (usually writers). Therefore, collaboration on the level of the production of manuscript, as well as subsequent publication, only partially depends on individuals sharing the workspace and working together in unison. Likewise, most readers enter into an exclusive relationship with the text: there is no author present in an act of reading, no writer either, only a reader and a text. As a result, the activity of reading is perceived to be solitary, as solitary (if not
even more so) as the activity of writing—in fact, when reading, a person is believed to be separated from his/her immediate surroundings, to be on his/her own, alone, even when sharing the actual space where the reading is performed.

Hence, in order to conceptualize collaboration, or authorship as collaboration, on the widest possible level that includes the participation of the reader, to bridge a gap that necessarily exists between those who participate in the system of literature, a gap in time, or space, or even language, there needs to exist a strong link among all who participate in this process, a link that very much resembles interpersonal relationships, a link that constitutes a literary relationship, and that as such serves as a basis for observing the resulting relationship as a form of creative, productive collaboration. The main claim in this chapter is that this link exists in the text itself as the axis of the essential relationship on which literary exchange is based. The text, due to its function and its place in this literary exchange, possesses a characteristic that can be best compared to subjectivity or, more precisely, every participant in the literary exchange is able to establish a relationship and, consequently, communication with every other participant due to the fact that the text functions as a surrogate subject. In other words, in order for literature to be perceived as a relationship, and consequently for authorship to be perceived in terms of collaboration, the text must be perceived as more than a mere object. Surely, it does not possess a type of personhood attributed to human beings, but its subjectivity is nevertheless relational: the text itself is not self-aware, writers and readers are aware of it, and through it are aware of each other, since to each the text is a representation of the other, not an anthropomorphized object, but rather a suggestion, or information about the existence of another person at the other end of the text. Or to turn to Martin Buber’s
distinction between “egos” and “persons”: “Egos appear by setting themselves apart from
other egos. Persons appear by entering into relation to other persons” (Buber 112). With
texts, both processes seem to be at work, since individual texts do appear by setting
themselves apart from other texts, but also by entering into relations with other texts as
well as into relations with writers, readers, editors, critics, scholars etc. That is to say, the
relationship that is eventually established is the relationship between (human) subjects,
individuals interacting at different times with the text. In this context the text as a
surrogate subject is a sort of catalyst\(^1\) that makes the literary exchange possible.

Consequently, the text has a certain degree of subjectivity (though not subjectivity
that would manifest as autonomous agency), subjectivity that is transferred onto it from
both ends of the literary process, serving to each participant in this relationship as the
surrogate for any (or all) other participant(s). Hence, this chapter will deal with the
possibility of observing text as a subject surrogate, as the other to every participant in the
system of literature, and in this capacity as the key of the collaborative relationship
established by all those who come into contact with it, all those who interact with it, with
a particular emphasis on the role of the reader in the process of authorship, or the literary
dialogue.

A claim by M. M. Bakhtin offers a start in the right direction, “it is our
relationship that determines an object and its structure, not conversely” (Art and
Answerability 5). By entering into a relationship (interaction) with a text, one enters into

\(^1\) A catalyst, however, by definition, remains unchanged by the reaction it assists, whereas texts do more
often than not change as a result of relationships they help create. These changes mostly manifest
themselves in the way that texts are perceived as a result of (critical) readings, for example, but they can
appear on a textual level as well, when readings (e.g. in the form of scholarly research) result in new
(amended) editions of a particular text. Still, while platinum, for example, if changed, even slightly, is no
longer considered platinum, Theodore Dreiser’s Sister Carrie is still Theodore Dreiser’s Sister Carrie
regardless of whether we consider the 1900 Doubleday & McClure or 1981 Pennsylvania edition.
a relationship with an other. However, there is no fixed other, such as ‘the author,’ or ‘the reader’ with whom to enter into a relationship: this ‘other’ is created through the interaction with the text, with the help of the clues provided in the text—this ‘other’ is a construct and as such a product of collaboration—contributions the sum of which accounts for this ‘other’ come from numerous individuals, these contributions are real (most recognizable in the form of, for example, manuscripts or criticism), which results in the ‘other’ as an equally real (albeit constructed) subject, a subject that constantly changes in respect to new contributions by new participants in the literary exchange. In this context, Bakhtin’s claim means that the character of text described here is a direct result of the attempts by all participants in the process of authorship to establish a dialogic, communicative relationship that bridges the gap of both time and space. This, in turn, suggests that all actions that fall under the category of literary activity carry a certain degree of what has been earlier described as authorial responsibility, what Valentin Voloshinov calls addressivity, “a quality of turning to someone” (Voloshinov 99), or what is to Bakhtin answerability, which manifests itself both in the creation (writerly and readerly) of a particular text, but also in the continuation of the wider literary communication.

EQUILIBRIUM AS THE PREREQUISITE FOR COLLABORATION

Of course, reaching for Voloshinov’s concept, the point at which the notion of authorship as collaboration deviates from Voloshinov’s definition of the literary relationship(s) must be addressed. The only way in which it is possible to imagine authorship as collaboration depends on the relative equilibrium between all those who participate in that process.
However, Voloshinov is clear, and often (mis)quoted in defense of the writerly dominance over the text:

A very commonly held opinion has it that the listener is to be regarded as equal to the author, excepting the latter’s technical performance, and that the position of a competent listener is supposed to be a simple reproduction of author’s position. In actual fact this is not so. Indeed, the opposite may sooner be said to be true. The listener never equals the author.

(Voloshinov 112)

Authorship as collaboration involves numerous participants performing a wide range of more or less distinct activities. Rather than describing these participants as equal, it could be said that they are in a balanced relationship—to successfully establish any type of literary exchange, the activity of any individual participant has its equivalent in the activity of every other participant, with the text functioning as a sort of fulcrum, sustaining the relationship between activities of different individuals (writers, editors, translators, critics, readers etc.). To be sure, these participants are in no way the same, nor are they interchangeable in the sense that one can function in place of the other. But (the activity of) each of them is essential in establishing the equilibrium, the contribution of each of them cannot be omitted; their individual contributions matter, because without the participation of each of them no literary text fully exists (meaning that it needs to be written, published, read, and discussed in order to exist). In other words, the type of balance described here is not necessarily measurable, it is not mathematical, but is, for a lack of a better term, an ethical one. Having all participants in the system of literature in balance means that in order to be perceived, a literary work necessarily creates a state of equilibrium among those who interact with it: by entering into a relationship with a text,
multiple subjects enter into a relationship with one another. The balance achieved in this way does not come from one individual performing an amount of effort equal to that of another individual, but from the fact that in his or her respective interaction with the text each individual is investing certain effort, and that no text can be perceived without taking into account the efforts of all those who interact with it. From the writerly end, this effort is easily recognizable, since writers invest a considerable amount of creative energy into their work. But that work gets recognized as a literary text only if a number of other subjects (editors, publishers, translators) also participate. To provide a simple illustration: Chester Himes never wrote *If He Hollers Let Him Go*... at least as far as someone reading only Croatian can perceive. That is to say, there exists a text titled *If He Hollers*... but because this text has not yet been translated to Croatian, there is no text that would be a Croatian version of *If He Hollers*... Due to the fact that no translator made an effort to present Himes to his potential public in Croatia, *If He Hollers*... for the purposes of literary exchange, does not exist—the English language original may even be considered as a literary fact, but because it has not been translated, it does not function as a literary text in Croatian. In fact, as far as any critical or scholarly discussion of translations of African-American literature in Croatian is concerned, a writer by the name of Chester Himes seems to have never existed. At the same time it possible that, for example, William Faulkner exists in Croatian, though he never spoke or wrote a single word of it (and in all likelihood never even considered the language). A number of individuals had to form a relationship with Faulkner’s texts in order for those texts to

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2 On the other hand, if one considers an average US reader, as well as the place of translations in the US publishing, we could say that Croatian literature as a whole does not exist, since it is present at the US literary scene only through a couple of short stories and an occasional novel or two—hardly enough to provide even the most enthusiastic reader with an insight into an entire national literature.
even be perceived as such, Nada Šoljan helped Faulkner exist in Croatian, Janko Moder did the same for him in Slovenian, Vincenzo Mantovani in Italian, François Pitavy in French… Of course, in examples of canonical authors, their effort seems to overshadow the effort of every other individual, but only because those other individuals invest their efforts to support the efforts of authors, and because authors also (most often) function as reference points around which the sum of literary activity is oriented. However, at each end of every text there is a person, one creating and the other recreating the text, and if there is not balance between the two, if they are not essentially equal, then the text does not exist.

This is in part recognized by Voloshinov as well, only he phrases it differently, since he tries to develop the figure of “the listener” *next to* and not *within* the figure of the (singular) author: “The listener has his own independent place in the event of artistic creation; he must occupy a special, and what is more, a two-sided position in it—with respect to the author and with respect to the hero” (Voloshinov 112). In the context of this chapter, every participant in the system of literature, or in the process of authorship occupies his or her “own independent place in the event of artistic creation,” but this is a position that is only seemingly two-sided, since the relationship with the text (to take a bit broader term than Voloshinov uses) *is* the relationship with the author—the only actual relationship available to most readers—which, in turn, means that there cannot be a relationship with the text that is not a relationship with the author at the same time or, in other words, a relationship with other subjects participating in the process of authorship. Thus the equilibrium recognized in collaboration lies not in the fact that participants in the process of authorship perform identical activities, or assume equal shares of authorial
responsibility, but in the fact that they all do participate (regardless of the type or significance of their contributions), and in the fact that the text as the axis of this relationship cannot function if each of the participants in the process of its authorship does not do his or her part.

According to the traditional notion of authorship and literature, the author does the work and his or her public more or less enjoys it. To say that the author is equal to his or her public, and vice versa, is to essentially disregard the work, the author’s effort, because, after all, the author does (all) the work. And the public? What does it do? Whatever the public does, it is clearly not the same as what the author does, which suggests that on the level of work performed the author and the public cannot ever be equal. Yet if one is to analyze literary authorship as collaboration, it is equally important to discover who works with whom, with how many, and how, as it is to find out who does what. In order to connect multiple subjects in the relationship that is literature, the essential step is to reevaluate the status of the work itself. In place of the traditional description of literature and authorship, where an author lords over his or her work, with the works themselves divided as major or minor and the public forming a more or less fertile bottom, the soil into which ideas fall in order to germinate and sprout back up again, here is a ‘horizontal’ view of authorship, with all the participants sharing one mutual plane of existence, occupying different parts of the same space, and exchanging their diverse perspectives in order to construct a literary network. More precisely, to phrase it ‘vertically,’ here is an answer to the question: What does the work do? Or, ‘horizontally’ put: What is the relationship of work to writers and readers? Whom does
the work *work with*, and how? The main part of this answer will rest on the dyadic relationship that the work engages in with all other participants in the system of literature.

**WHY THE DYAD?**

There are three main reasons why the dyad can be seen as the basic relationship, one found behind all literary relationships, all (literary) communication. First is that the majority of critics examining collaborative authorship, have almost exclusively used as examples works of collaborative pairs. True, there are probably more cases of dual authorship than there are of mass authorship, and dealing with just two authorial entities seems far less troublesome than attempting to decipher literary intentions of, for example, an entire city, as might be the case with *Invisible Seattle*. Though an instance of authorship may involve many participants, one of the hypotheses presented here is that collaborators are, regardless of their number, constantly paired up, with the text functioning as the other to a particular, individual authorial self. Engaged in a collaboration, an individual is constantly engaged in a dialog, constantly engaged with the other, or the text as a representative of the other. In this context, the basic roles of writer and reader are not fixed, or permanent, in the sense that all writers are readers and, to a degree, vice versa. Secondly, the pair, the dyad, can be seen as the most neutral unit, with both members suspended at the point between majority and minority; a unit that, consequently, depends on each of its members as much as it depends on both of them. Surely, if it is observed from the outside a dyad can also be a site of domination of one of its members over the other, as well as a site of conflict. However, in the context of overt literary collaboration, conflict and discord can find their place if they are productive,
meaning if the relationship yields a text. Finally, this notion of the dyadic relationship is influenced by Michael Farrell’s study *Collaborative Circles*, in which he recognizes the tendency of larger creative groups to subdivide into pairs or dyads. It is in the crucial phase of a creative group’s development, or what Farrell recognizes as “The Quest Stage,” within the dyad that “[m]ost episodes of creative work occur… [with] the paired members who are likely to make the discoveries or to develop the style or the theory that defines the group culture” (Farrell 22, 23). A sociologist, Farrell is focused on the actual group dynamics with the pair as the basic operative unit, but for him the text (“work”) itself remains merely a product of creative labor, an object. One must, however, acknowledge the potential of text to connect with and invite to creative action subjects outside of the immediate creative circle. Thus, it is the work itself that further involves other subjects into innumerable dyadic relationships that constitute the system of art, or in this case, the system of literature.

Here the relationship between (any) two participants in the literary exchange is balanced on the text itself. Traditionally, these participants are recognized according to the type of interaction they establish with the text (writing, reading etc.), but each of them can in some degree be seen as an author (or co-author) of the text because s/he either creates it through the process of literary composition (writing) or actualizes it through the process of literary consumption (reading). Consequently, every participant in the literary exchanges establishes a dyadic relationship with the text as the surrogate for the other, achieving an indirect type of communication, but communication nevertheless.

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3 Needless to say, it is hardly arguable whether there can be any mention of domination and conflict in dyads that do not rely on shared presence, that is in dyads that are established when texts function as the surrogate for the other.
To be sure, every text is able to support numerous literary relationships, numerous dyads that are easiest to detect if one looks for the traditional division of literary labor or the traditional division of interactions with the text. Important to note is that all literary activities can be performed by any number of individuals, but that a text for which a single individual would exclusively perform all of those activities (writing, editing, publishing, reading etc.) would effectively defeat its purpose as the nexus of literary exchange. In other words, no dyadic relationship with the text is exclusive in the sense that it prevents it from forming similar relationships with other individuals: for example, writerly control over a particular text is rather illusory since it cannot ever determine how that text is going to be read, or perceived by other individuals. Quite the contrary, on the most basic level, due to the fact that every text relies on a collaboratively produced and maintained system (language) it is able to support multiple and diverse activities, or consequently, multiple and diverse meanings that are anchored in the text itself (as well as in language itself), that do not close or complete the text but open it to new meanings (or new interpretations).

In other words, by sharing a dyadic relationship with the text, every participant in the literary exchange (or every author) is effectively sharing that text with others who interact with it, and in that sense sharing a creative, collaborative relationship with them.

THE WORKING DEFINITION OF TEXT

For the sake of the present argument literary text can be defined as a complex artistic (linguistic) message. To be sure, this is a simplification of a sort, since a text could be more accurately described as a bundle of messages, but considering that these messages
are indeed bundled in a single unit (text), and regardless of the fact that not all messages within a text may have the same destination (nor indeed the same origin), it is more practical to observe a text as a single message. By saying that a text is a message it is implied that it is equally a product of activities of writing and reading, it does not function unless it is both sent and received, nor does it exist without its medium, its material basis. From this it follows that a literary text is a structure predominantly employing or relying upon language that exists in a publicly available form, meaning that it is published, regardless of the media used for its dissemination. To paraphrase the definition of text provided by Paul Ricoeur, already referred to in the introduction to this thesis, text is any discourse initiated or opened (and not “fixed”) by writing, which basically means that text is any discourse equally maintained by activities of writing and reading. Here these two activities are referred to in their broadest possible meaning, with all conceivable material implications (meaning that reading and writing are a part of every literary activity). According to Katherine Hayles texts are not “immaterial constructions independent of the substrates in which they are instantiated” (Hayles 97), but that does not mean that they are as fixed and finite as the materiality of those “substrates” suggests. Quite the contrary, the material form in which a particular text is disseminated only contributes to the text’s plurality, which consequently means, as Hayles concludes referring to Jerome McGann, that “text is never identical to itself” (Hayles 98), or that the material form—and here we would also add those participants in the production of texts responsible for the material form (designers, illustrators etc.)—contributes to the text, or its openness. On one hand, as McGann points out:

Every text has variant of itself screaming to get out, or antithetical texts waiting to make themselves known. These variants and antitheses appear
(and multiply) over time, as the hidden features of the textual media are
developed and made explicit. They appear because even the most
‘informational’ text comprises an interactive mechanism of
communicative exchange. Various readers and audiences are hidden in
our texts, and the traces of their multiple presence are scripted at the
most material levels.

(The Textual Condition 10)

In a nutshell, every involvement with the text has at least the potential of producing a
new (variant of the) text. However, the impression that a person is repeatedly dealing
with one and the same text, stems from that very dyadic relationship each reader (or
writer) enters with the text. At this point, however, it might be useful to, briefly, turn to
Buber, for whom, “[e]very actual relationship in the world rests upon individuation”
(Buber 148), which in terms of establishing a relationship with the text means that
whoever enters such a relationship must perceive the text as individual, and not a
conglomeration of variants. In other words, the plurality of text can be acknowledged
only a priori (as an abstract fact), or a posteriori (by acquainting oneself with other
readings by other people, through, again, other texts), but not in the very act of reading
(or writing). This, however, does not stop one from repeatedly entering into a relationship
with the ‘same’ text in order to discover its plurality.

Here, this notion in part borrowed from Umberto Eco’s definition of text, “a
network of different messages depending on different codes and working on different
levels of signification” (Eco 5), that suggests a plurality of messages within any given
text, further implying that a text as such cannot be reduced to a single, simple message,
but that it depends on participation (interpretation) of those who chose to get involved
with it, in any capacity, as readers, writers, editors, critics, scholars etc. What is more, the
complexity of text as a message comes exactly from the fact that, along with certain ideas, it must contain instructions on how to access the message, as well as how to respond to, or replicate it. As McGann puts it, “poetical [or literary] texts operate to display their own practices, to put them forward as the subject of attention… [they] turn readers back upon themselves, make them attentive to what they are doing when they read” (The Textual Condition 10-11). In this sense, each literary text is automatically an instruction manual on how to be literarily active; one is invited to read the text, comment on it, discuss it, copy or imitate it, create one just like or unlike it, expand it, reshape it. This characteristic—the property of being both the product of and the stimulus for literary activity—is what distinguishes a text from other language structures, and other types of, McGann would say “informational” messages.

Defined this way, texts serve a distinct purpose, related to one of the figurative meanings of the term ‘text’ itself, according to which a text is “the starting-point of a discussion; a statement on which any one dilates” (OED), an invitation to a dialogue containing initial ideas upon which further communication is to be built. And it is in this dialogue-inducing quality of texts that one discovers the first clue to the relationships forming within the literary discourse. In order to conduct a successful dialogue, the attention of all interlocutors, regardless of their number, needs to be directed at the one who is speaking at any particular moment. It is equally important that this attention switches evenly between all interlocutors, but at one precise moment it rests on only one of them, before moving along with the dialogue. When dealing with texts, in order for a text to even exist, other subjects need to direct their attention at it, either as writers or as
readers, they need to enter into a dialogue with the text, engage in a temporarily exclusive dyadic relationship with the text.

**READING AS RELATIONSHIP**

Consequently, it makes no difference how many subjects one identifies on either the writerly or the readerly end of the relationship. Even when committing acts of writing in solitude, an individual enjoys the company of texts, or the company of language, with the text as the stand-in for Francis Jacques’ “he/she,” not exactly a person, but not exactly a mere object either. However, it might not be immediately obvious in what sense does reading, arguably the most widespread literary activity, constitute a relationship, especially since, for example, Wolfgang Iser, claims that…

… [a]n obvious and major difference between reading and all forms of social interaction is the fact that with reading there is no *face-to-face situation*. A text cannot adapt itself to each reader with whom it comes in contact. The partners in dyadic interaction can ask each other questions in order to ascertain how far their views have controlled contingency, or their images have bridged the gap of inexperienceability of one another’s experiences. The reader, however, can never learn from the text how accurate or inaccurate are his views of it.

(*The Act of Reading* 166)

To move beyond Iser it suffices to recognize there is no difference between reading (or writing, for that matter) and direct dialogue, and to observe both as types of communication the role of which is not necessarily to produce final complete understanding, but to lead to further communication. Just as interlocutors “can ask each other questions,” so can a reader repeatedly interrogate a text, or, if need be, seek further
texts that will expand his or her comprehension of the initial text. In both cases, the result of communication is more communication.

Here also lies the root of understanding reading as interaction, since the text equally interrogates the reader, by inviting him or her to provide meaning, by soliciting interpretation, and consequently further creation of new texts. In this sense, the only difference between writing and reading is that most acts of reading do not result in any immediate material evidence, most acts of reading remain pure mental activities, any new text produced by reading usually stays in the mind of the reader, whereas by writing this new text is committed to one media or another. However, if looking for evidence of readerly activity it suffices to point out that without it Raymond Queneau’s *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* is a collection of only ten sonnets and not one hundred thousand billion, or that Julio Cortázar’s *Hopscotch* has anywhere between fifty six and one hundred and fifty five chapters, depending on the reader’s preference.

**READERS AND WRITERS: RECIPROCAL INVENTION**

If, on the other hand, one should concentrate only on the physical aspects of writing, reading, and the resulting literary exchange, it would be easy to subscribe to Paul Ricoeur’s position that “the book divides the act of writing and the act of reading into two sides, between which there is no communication. The reader is absent from the act of writing; the writer is absent from the act of reading” (Ricoeur 146-147). Yet, Ricoeur himself prefers to imagine the author as already dead and hence physically “unable to respond” (Ricoeur 147), indicating that some sort of communication might exist. In the very act of writing, the reader *is* present, as a rule, not in flesh, although overt
collaboration challenges even that notion since collaborators are each other’s writers and readers. Still, even in the most traditional (or solitary) act of writing, as Walter Ong suggests, “[t]he writer must set up a role in which absent and often unknown readers can cast themselves” (Ong 100-101). This “fictionalization of readers is what makes writing so difficult” (Ong 174), or as Matei Calinescu suggests, “slower and more painstaking than… speech” (Calinescu 64), or direct dialogue. But regardless of how slow and painstaking it may be, there are grounds, as shown in the previous chapter, for considering writing (no matter how solitary) a form of collaboration.

As Gregory Clark suggests, “writing is inherently a collaborative act in which writer and reader construct together a version of knowledge that is in some way new to them both” (Clark 30). This shared “construct[ion]… of knowledge,” must be accompanied by some sort of communication, some sort of relationship. Stanley Coen, quoting M. M. Schwartz, offers a clue towards understanding this relationship, “the literary relationship occurs between people; the reader seeks an experience, not with a text but with his own (fictional) ‘embodiment’ of the author” (Coen 19). After all, for Schwartz “the author I seek is actually always a fiction I recreate through his fictions” (qtd. in Coen 19), which combined with Ong’s notion of “fictionalization of readers” results in reciprocal fictionalization between writers and readers. Or if, as Eco puts it, authors must “foresee a model of the possible reader” (Eco 7), it stands to reason that readers must equally foresee a model of the possible author, or writer, performing in that aspect equal labor of fictionalization. In this, the concepts of writer and reader come close to those of implied author and implied reader. However, for Wayne Booth, both the implied author and the implied reader are the creation of the (singular) author (or writer):
“The author creates… an image of himself and another image of his reader; he makes his reader, as he makes his second self” (Booth 138), whereas in the context of this chapter, similarly to Iser, it is useful to emphasize the reciprocity of the fictionalization, and the corresponding (re)distribution of responsibility.

**COLLABORATIVE CREATION**

The only problem with this reciprocal relationship is that it might seem as if it is its own purpose: writers imagine readers, readers imagine writers, with texts serving as nothing more but notes aiding this mutual imagining. What is more, the notion of the text as an object is further promoted by the antiquated, but still prevalent notion of the prosthetic function of text, “the text as the author’s body” (Haugen in Griffin 47). If this approach to text is to be fully abandoned, then collaboration must be recognized as the underlying principle of authorship, but at the same time text must be seen as more than an object.

In fact, these two ideas actively support each other. According to Bakhtin, “[w]hen constructing my utterance, I try actively to determine this [addressee’s] response. Moreover, I try to act in accordance with the response I anticipate, so this anticipated response, in turn, exerts an active influence on my utterance” (Speech Genres 95). This would suggest that either in the process of reading or in the process of writing readers and writers never deal with the ‘complete’ text, since this ‘complete’ text always necessarily contains contributions of others whom they need to fictionalize. Or in other words, the text, along with the reader or the writer, needs to be imagined, which constitutes it as a subject, imagined, but nevertheless a subject—after all, the reader and the writer are equally imagined at different points of the literary relationship. As Kay
Halasek concludes, “[t]he Bakhtinian audience functions neither as an ‘equal to the author’ nor a receiver of the discourse but as a coauthor of discourse” (Halasek 53), and this “discourse” or text needs to be brought into, or maintained in existence through its relationships with writers and readers as an entity of its own, and not a mere reflection of writerly (or readerly) intentions or persons.

**RELATIONSHIP WITH THE TEXT**

Consistent with the description of the role of the reader provided by, among others, Umberto Eco—“The reader as an active principal of interpretation is part of the picture of the generative process of the text” (Eco 4)—reading is not a relationship with the writer, but with the text, in which the text is co-constructed by the reader. Or as, Coen suggests, summing up H. G. Gadamer’s view: “Reading is an event during which meanings are created and the reader achieves a communion with the text but not with the author” (Coen 14). This is consequently why there is here an emphasis on the dyadic model of the basic literary relationship, rather than triadic, since in all literary relationships at any given time there are at least two subjects present: the text (subject-surrogate), and whoever interacts with it. According to Gadamer: “What is fixed in writing, has detached itself from the contingency of its origin and its author and made itself free for new relationships” (qtd. in Coen 14). The dyad is the basis of those new relationships, and exactly because the text is not a human subject, because it is not a mortal biological entity, but a more permanent language entity, there exists the possibility for infinite new relationships.

Analyzing Gadamer’s notion of reading, Coen concludes that…
… the partners in the literary experience are the text, not the author, and the interpreter. Nevertheless, Gadamer understands the reading of a text as akin to conversation in that a common expression is shared between reader and author. This last point provides enough ambiguity to encourage the possibility of the reader’s communion with the author and not merely with his fixed, inanimate text.

(Coen 14-15)

This means that a relationship with the text is effectively also a relationship with the other human being at either the writerly or the readerly end of the text, and the purpose of this language entity recognized as text is to broaden the possibilities for communication beyond the time and space immediately shared by human beings. And the fact that the “text is never identical to itself” (Hayles 98) means only that there is infinite possibility for participation in the particular text’s authorship. Consequently, this is the reason why reading can be perceived as more than mere consumption of text—if the reader is to be considered a co-creator of the text, then the definition of authorship necessarily needs to be expanded in order to include all those who perform that activity, indeed all those who come into any meaningful contact with the text, which effectively determines the text as the axis of literary communication.

TEXTUAL SURROGACY

Establishing this type of communication by way of literary texts is possible due to a characteristic of texts tentatively dubbed here as textual surrogacy. In the simplest terms, this means that any text serves as a surrogate of otherness to anyone who encounters it; to any other subject the text is that ‘other than I,’ with whom it is possible to engage in a dialogue. As a surrogate the text is, to borrow from a dictionary definition, “appointed by
Authority [our emphasis] to act in place of another; a deputy” (OED). In other words, text is authorized, not necessarily to be ‘me,’ to act in ‘my place,’ but simply to be, to possess subjecthood equal to ‘my own,’ to be ‘my equal’—and authorized by ‘myself,’ or more precisely by any subject who interacts with it, which results in all those subjects taking part in that text’s authorship.

Authority is, thus, a necessary condition of surrogacy—without the authority of another subject, a surrogate cannot function, cannot exist—and if this authority is in any way a mark of authorship and authorial responsibility, it is present in equal measure on both the writerly and the readerly end of literary communication, since a text does not exist if it is not written, as much as it does not exist if it is not read. Here it should again be emphasized that our description is purely metaphorical, and that texts themselves possess no agency aside from that which is invested in them by the users of texts, which is a further indication of the collaborative character of literary authorship.

In this respect, the notion of text functioning as the surrogate for the other is somewhat similar to Barthes’ description “the substitute for nothing… neither a body nor even an object… but merely a field, a vessel for expansion” (The Pleasure of the Text 5). In other words, text is not subject to the authority of a single individual alone, and as such is not a substitute for one particular person, but it owes its existence to authority that is shared by so many individuals that the resulting surrogate has a composite entity quite separate and quite distinguishable from those who have authorized (or authored) it. From this it follows that the text is the other to the writer, or consequently, the reader; an other not necessarily definable in terms of personhood, but an other with which any participant in the system of literature can meaningfully interact. More precisely, the text is a space
that allows the reader (as well as the writer) to exist. In practical terms, without the text there can be no reader, in the same sense as there can be no text without the reader, hence they are mutually definable, achieving type of subjectivity we already referred to, existence that is “[e]xistence… with” (Nancy 4), forming a relationship that mirrors the relationship of the writer and the text.

THE INTEGRITY OF TEXT

One of the key characteristics of the text as more than an object is its integrity, a sort of resilience that rests on the plurality of creative contributions—a text is maintained in function and in existence because every individual contribution by every individual contributor becomes a significant part of the text, meaning that there are no minor and major contributions, only the text as such, as one encounters it, as one completes it by encountering it. Thus, in order to acknowledge the integrity of text, it is necessary to acknowledge the plurality of input, the plurality of contributions, with no contribution being insignificant or less significant. After all, as Howard Becker puts it:

> Whatever the artist, defined as the person who performs the core activity without which the work would not be art, *does not do* [our emphasis] must be done by someone else. The artist thus works in the center of a network of cooperating people, *all* [again our emphasis] of whose work is essential to the final outcome.

(Becker 24-25)

From this it follows that, since the text owes its existence to so many participants in the process of authorship, it is effectively not dominated by any of them. An artist may find him or herself at the center of a network constructed around a particular text, as Becker
suggests—though one could argue that it is the text that is at the center, with the nominal author only closer to it than other (human) subjects—but this central position does not guarantee absolute control.

A good example of how relative nominal authorial control is, as well as what textual integrity entails, might be *The Gilded Age* by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner, as originally published in 1873, in respect to *The Adventures of Colonel Sellers*, Twain’s share of *The Gilded Age* published as a separate volume by Doubleday in 1965. From a historical perspective, Twain had a chance to control only one of these two texts, and considering that texts potentially have much greater longevity than those persons designated as their authors, a ‘hold’ that a nominal author has on a particular text is quite fleeting. On the other hand, both *The Gilded Age* and *The Adventures of Colonel Sellers* retain full integrity only if one treats them as not even versions of the same text, but as distinct, though related, individual texts. If, on the other hand, one would insist that the two are in fact one and the same text, neither would be fully autonomous: *The Gilded Age* would be a bloated version of the novel, containing uninteresting gibberish of an arguably minor literary figure (Warner), and *The Adventures of Colonel Sellers* would be a textual ‘halfling.’ This said, it must noted that texts are quite resilient, but their resilience depends on their relationships with other subjects, as well as on recognizing their plurality. For instance, the permutations of Theodore Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie*, from the unfortunate 1900 Doubleday, Page & Co. Edition to the, possibly even less fortunate, 1981 Pennsylvania Edition, prove that every type of engagement with the text creates a new and different text, each possessing integrity only if integrity is recognized to all others as well. To be sure, the examples mentioned here (*The Gilded Age* and *Sister
Carrie) are products of different degrees of collaboration that can range from full, overt literary partnership (as that between Twain and Warner) to interventions that are more profit than text driven (Doubleday’s halving of The Gilded Age), to scholarly attempts to purge authorship from signs of collaboration (the 1981 Pennsylvania Edition of Sister Carrie)—which is to say that though overt collaboration may never become a norm, traces of collaboration are nevertheless present in even the most singular or solitary type of authorship and should be acknowledged as such.

**WHAT KIND OF A SUBJECT IS TEXT SUPPOSED TO STAND FOR?**

Thus, unlike objects that are whole, and that owe their objectness exactly to the fact that they can be perceived as whole, texts, and all subjects, are inherently unwhole, they owe their subjectness to the fact that they become whole only through their interaction with other subjects. In other words, borrowing from Francis Jacques, one could assert that subjects are created through relationships: “An individual standing before someone else becomes a person [or subject] when the two of them form a dyad of interlocutors who are agents in a process of co-reference” (Jacques 228). Though Jacques tends to abolish subjects and puts emphasis on relationships, it is useful here to redefine the subject so that its subjectness depends on its relationship(s) with other subjects, its/his/her relationships with the other. Therefore, in order for the writer and the reader to establish a relationship, the text needs to function as a subject surrogate, since the writer and the reader are in direct contact only with the text and not with one another. More precisely, if the writer and the reader are to retain their subjecthood, the text needs to shed its ‘objecthood.’
Wolfgang Iser, for one, identified this loss of objecthood that occurs when the text is approached by the reader: “As text and reader… merge into a single situation, the division between subject and object no longer applies… meaning is no longer an object to be defined, but is an effect to be experienced” (The Act of Reading 9-10). Conversely, it might be suggested that the text acquires a semblance of subjecthood when being interacted with exactly because it does not merge with the reader but remains identifiable as a separate entity—a text becomes a subject surrogate when another subject deals with it. Or to put it more bluntly, a text becomes a text when it is approached by both writers and readers, in the same way as writers and readers become who they are when they approach the text.

Exactly for this reason it is necessary to take into account the relative subjecthood (or subject-surrogacy) of text, since if compared to an object, a subject invites a particular type of interaction. As Eku Wand defines it, interactivity is “the dialogue between a machine and its user,” or “rather a dialogue with people, conducted across the detour of a machine” where what the machine has to say to the user is “furnished by its makers” (Wand 165). Translated into the context of literature this “machine” is the text, a sort of machine made of language, and the literary dialogue is one with people, among people, “conducted across the detour of a” text, where the only option for treating those persons on the other end of the text as subjects is to treat the text itself as a subject-surrogate, or surrogate for the other. Hence, the interactivity of text lies in the fact that one cannot ever perceive it in its entirety, as a whole, because it does not possess entirety, it does not possess wholeness, but rather one perceives it again and again only through the act of reading, through continual interaction, since it possesses no fixed meaning, but rather the meaning is perpetually
created and transformed in the act of reading, which is, as Iser suggests, “a dynamic interaction between text and reader” (The Act of Reading 107). Or in other words, that same plurality of input that is the basis of textual integrity, is also a source for infinite interaction with a particular text, which explains why it is possible to return to the same text again and again and derive from it new meanings, especially if the readings (and writings) of others who have interacted with the same text are taken into account.

This also means that there can never be a full, complete image of a text, nothing can stand in its stead, it stands for itself, which is a mark of a subject. When Barthes lists the defining characteristics of the “Text,” he offers a glimpse of the text’s (surrogate) subjecht_odd. Namely, the qualities of not to be “defined,” or to be “experienced only in an activity” (From Work to Text 74, 75), can be found in a subject, since the subjecht_odd is realized and recognized only through interaction: one is never complete in oneself, nor can one communicate with oneself, except by pretending that the self is the other. Furthermore, to borrow a definition from Terry Eagleton, “subjectivity is simply that which is in no sense whatsoever an object, the absolute other of all such lowly facticity… [that which] can never become determinate, since if it did so it would lapse in that moment to the degraded status of thinghood” (Biriotti & Miller 43). This means, in short, that a subject can never be reduced to anything, the quality which is recognized in literary texts as well, since no text can be replaced with an object or a symbol, same as no text can stand for another text.
FROM THE IMPERSONAL SUBJECT, TO PLURAL SUBJECT, TO COLLABORATION

For Roland Barthes, however, text as an entity cannot be established without first erasing the subject of the author, since he seems to operate with the notion that subjecthood is necessarily achieved at someone else’s expense, by subordinating another to one’s self, by identifying objects in respect to one’s subject. In this, Barthes honors the traditional demand for the singularity of subject, for him the subject is still unique, individual, solitary, achieving its status by being separate from everything that surrounds it. Therefore, in order to create a new subject (“writing,” “scriptor,” “reader”), he must do away with the old one, there can be no coexistence of multiple subjects:

Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing… As soon as a fact is narrated… finally outside of any function other than that of the very practice of the symbol itself, this disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins.

*Image, Music, Text* 142

Surely, here the identity of the author is perceived as lost, because it is transferred onto the text—the very subjectness is given over to the text, through becoming involved with it, either by writing it, or by reading it, “the author enters into his own death, writing begins.” As for the text, “writing,” it can be perceived as “neutral” (or autonomous), exactly because it is not under the rule of the author-subject, but in numerous relationships with numerous subjects, relationships that represent fragments constituting that “composite” space, or composite entity of text.

Yet, Barthes is reluctant to replace the singular subject of the author with an open plurality of subjects, as if that plurality would unavoidably have to consist of minor
subjects, each of whom would by itself be an insufficient replacement for the glorified author. Instead, Barthes comes up with a new subject to follow each of his proclamations of the author’s death: “… the modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not the subject with the book as a predicate; there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written here and now” (Image, Music, Text 145). Consequently, the text and the scriptor, the writer, as well as the reader (indeed, anyone interacting with the text) are in a mutually definable relationship, since, as already suggested, neither of them exists without the other, neither of them exists prior to the other.

Paradoxically, Barthes acknowledges the plurality of text, “a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation” (Image, Music, Text 148), but cannot imagine an authorial plurality, one that would constitute collaborative authorship, a reciprocal creative relationship among writers and readers. In fact, in order not to create a sort of singular supertext, one that would simply take the place and assume the role of the singular author, it is necessary to emphasize the plurality of texts—the fact that there is a multitude of texts neither of which can stand for another or a group of other texts. This is consistent with Barthes’ claim: “The Text is plural,” which suggests an inner plurality “of meaning,” but can also be expand by asserting that the texts are plural, meaning that there is a plurality among the texts, and that belonging to “the intertextual” does not reduce the integrity (or the plurality) of individual texts (From Work to Text 76, 77). In other words, whereas Barthes considers the “Text” as an abstract (and almost transcendental) category, it is useful to recognize the plurality of text(s) as their very
concrete, material aspect as well: manifesting in the fact that texts are disseminated in numerous copies, but also in many versions (either editions or translations), and that, thanks to that visible, material plurality, they inspire the plurality of readings. In this way, one can avoid what Jack Stillinger calls “textual primitivism,” a kind of pragmatic, simplifying approach to literature, “grounded in the beliefs that there is only one text for each poem and that each poem corresponds to a single author” (Stillinger 73), and consequently emphasize that the plurality of texts (as well as the plurality of the “Text”), should not be based on the notion of a solitary individual absorbed in self-expression, but should find their equivalent in the plurality of authors, and the plurality of authorship.

**CONCLUSION - THE FUNCTION OF THE DYAD**

Drawing from this it is possible to assert that, if observed as a subject-surrogate, the text allows every subject in the system of literature to enter into a potential collaboration with any and all other subjects. This is achieved through the essential dyadic relationship established between all subjects, by way of text serving as a surrogate-subject, a surrogate of the other to every other subject. One can imagine this dyadic relationship by borrowing two distinct ideas, one from Jean-Luc Nancy and the other from Martin Buber. According to Nancy, “[b]eing cannot be anything but being-with-one-another, circulating in the with and as the with of this singularly plural coexistence” (Nancy 3). In terms of literature, this seems rather straightforward: one is an author (a writer or a reader) only in relationship to the text, and this text is a subject only in relationship to an author (a writer or a reader). But, for Buber, “every actual relationship to another being in the world is exclusive” (Buber 126), which in the context of one’s relationship with the text means
that every person interacting with a particular text engages in an exclusive dyad with that
text, a relationship that nevertheless does not prevent that same text from establishing a
myriad of dyads with other readers and writers, who all consequently participate in that
text’s authorship.

A dyad functions, and exists, only if both of its members work, not necessarily in
accord, but in respect, reaction, in relation to each other, if their activity at the same time
constitutes a relationship: a text cannot function on its own, has to be written and read.
Similarly a reader comes into existence, is created, made at the very same moment when
s/he begins to interact with the text, a writer is turned into a writer in the very process of
writing.4 What is more, if one member ceases to participate in a dyad, the dyad no longer
exists. Whereas groups with more than two members continue to exist if a single,
individual member withdraws from them. Consequently, each of the two members of a
dyad is as essential as the other one, the state of a dyad is a state of equilibrium—the state
that allows no minority, or the state that is equally a state of majority and a state of
minority. As such, the dyad is the basic type of a relationship, with all relationships that
involve more than two members, as noted by Francis Jacques, being potentially reducible
to that of a dyad (Jacques 35), and exactly because both members of a dyad are equally
important the reciprocity of the dyadic relationship allows fair distribution of
responsibility for its existence.

As pointed out earlier, the responsibility for a text is shared by all those who
approach it, whether it be from the writerly or the readerly end. Such a text, as an

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4 As authors, both readers and writers, earn this title only once their work is done: there are no a priori
authors, as there are no a priori readers or writers, yet while the activities of reading and writing define
individuals as they are performing them, ‘authoring’ (if it can be recognized as an activity at all) can only
be acknowledged after the fact.
autonomous space, contains all contributions to the collaborative process, they all equally belong to the text regardless of what might be or might have been the relationship between individual contributors. As a result, the text puts all collaborators, regardless of the degree of their involvement into a dyadic relationship with one another, the text pairs them up, standing in for every other to every self that comes in contact with it, becoming thus a catalyst of the potential collaborative process.

Imagined in these terms, the text becomes the basic element of the literary relationship, enabling readers and writers to participate in the literary exchange beyond mere consumption or self-expression. If recognized as a subject surrogate, the text permits one to observe literature as a resilient, vibrant, living system in which every involvement, every input of every participant has a place and a value. In this context, it is also far easier to explain and understand the “social” character of text that Jerome McGann refers to (McGann 43), as well as to attribute a function to that social character: if seen as a subject, every text assumes a role in perpetuating literary exchange that goes beyond its immediate artistic value. Finally, it is as a subject that the text fulfills its purpose as defined by Barthes: “the Text requires an attempt to abolish…the distance between writing and reading…by linking the two together in a single signifying process” (From Work to Text 79). After all, it is exactly this “signifying process” that constitutes the collaborative aspect of literary authorship, a process that consequently distributes individual responsibility for literary texts more evenly among all those who interact with it, while at the same time enabling them to effectively interact with one another.
Understanding Collaboration

If anything can be said about openly collaborative authorship, it is that it makes apparent the conditions of all authorship. In a very similar way it can be claimed that the initial attempt to defend this dissertation (or, more precisely, its previous, dismissed version) by both persons who conceived and created it was only making the conditions of academic authorship more obvious. This has been already hinted in the preface, but one of those persons was officially required to go into greater detail regarding the matter in a new, separate chapter.

But before any description of this collaboration is offered, it would be important to note that all authorship is to an extent merely declarative (the term ‘nominal’ has previously also been frequently used). This means that declarations or statements of authority are habitually attached to texts in order to designate the person or persons responsible for that text. Declarations of authority reflect beliefs (or norms) of authority shared by the person or persons responsible for a particular texts, as well as its (intended) public. If anything, the aim of this dissertation had been to erase the divide between that ‘person or persons responsible’ and that ‘public’ by proposing to distribute the total sum of responsibility for any text among all who interact with that text in any capacity. In reality, this notion clashes with the traditional view of authorship that has a well-established place in university rulebooks. Paradoxically, had the collaboration in question been a clandestine one, and had only one person declared him or herself the author of this dissertation, the strength of that (false) declaration, the strength of belief in singular authorship would not allow that person’s authorship to ever be questioned. After all, an
author, by connecting his or her name to a particular text, testifies that our belief\(^1\) is warranted, and not misplaced.

As for the members of the Dissertation Committee called upon to evaluate this particular work, they are, to a certain extent, expected to either stretch their beliefs regarding authorship or to disregard the fact that the previous version of the dissertation (which was initially found to be satisfactory) was a product of collaboration. Luckily, when it comes to their beliefs, individuals are often more flexible than institutions, more prone to take into account exceptions and precedents. Up to the very point of submitting that first (rejected by the School of Graduate Studies) dissertation in its final form (following the, at the time successful, defense), the author(s) of this dissertation has (have) had the very best fortune to be dealing (almost exclusively) with individuals rather than with the institution. However, once the institution became aware of what has been going on right under its nose (?) for almost six years (and under the auspices of the Department of English as one of its branches), it suspended the right of individuals to their own beliefs, and enforced an official, institutional belief regarding proper authorship.

At this time, however, presenting a detailed account of those six years might be too great a task, particularly since there is hardly any critical distance. Hence, the temptation is great to include the entire statement submitted to the Academic Integrity Board convened to deliberate on the validity of the first dissertation defense. In that document (dated June 14, 2011), the entire case was put as succinctly as possible without omitting any important details. Of that statement, and hopefully this is permissible even

\(^1\) Here the term ‘belief’ reflects to what level the notion of authorship (meaning singular authorship) has been elevated in the public (as well as scholarly) discourse, but the term “ideology” employed by Peter Jaszi might be just as useful (Jaszi qtd. in *Authority Matters*, 9).
though it may not be quite tactful, one larger segment might be helpful in presenting a timeline of the relationship between the author(s) of this dissertation (as well as the previous one) and Case Western Reserve University (as represented by particular individuals and its different branches). This statement was composed by the person who will as be defending the current version of the dissertation, the person officially registered as a student at CWRU:

When we first applied to Case, now six years ago (and we did apply as a collaborative team) Ognjen and I made no attempt to hide our identity, nor our intention to share all our work. In fact, we approached in the same manner a number of universities all of which have decided not to grant us admittance, expecting, no doubt, the situation we are in today. The Department of English at Case, however, must have seen some glimpse of potential in our desire to match the subject of our research (collaborative authorship) with a corresponding method of research (collaboration). At that point, there had been no false pretense on either side: we had not deceived the University regarding our intentions, and the members of the Department of English had not given us false expectations – only I was to be formally accepted as a student, and should our work be eventually found satisfactory, only I was to receive a degree (as was the case during our studies at Otis College of Art & Design where we earned my MFA in creative writing).

In the next two years of coursework and academic training, Ognjen and I attended all classes together – our effort and the amount of work we have put in is best judged by our professors and our peers. We can only claim that we at no point did a disservice to the Department or the University, and we are pretty sure that none of our colleagues felt we had an unfair advantage. If anything, they – same as those undergraduate students with whom we have worked either as TAs or as writing tutors – had the benefit of our shared experience and dual perspectives (perspectives that are never identical, and occasionally opposing). In those two years, as well as in the course of our entire time at Case, we had a chance to meet and work with a number of fine scholars and students, all of
whom were probably a bit surprised by the manner of our collaboration, but none of whom had found it objectionable or dishonest. What is more, through different programs (most notably SAGES) the University had shown that it seriously considered collaboration as a way of advancing academic and scholarly efforts – in fact, considering how unorthodox our collaboration may seem, we found ourselves strangely at home: we were accepted and respected for our work, and we felt that at Case we will be able to produce our best work.

At the same time, most people whom we have met at Case openly wondered how we managed to make our relationship function. None of them had seen it as an advantage, especially when it came to writing, and a few of them admitted that they themselves could never manage it. Though to us this mode of creation now comes naturally, we have been working exclusively in collaboration for the past fifteen years and have a literary career (for what it might be worth) in both Croatian and English consisting of novels, a collection of short stories, and numerous other publications. On the most practical level, we worked to fit two people where normally only one is expected to fit – both in terms of space and budget, as well as in terms of intellect and temperament, and the time we have spent at Case has only reinforced our collaborative relationship as the fundamental characteristic of our identity, as well as our identities: I am the person that I am because I work with Ognjen (and the same is true for him). What is more, the subject of our research was, and is inherently tied with our mode of work as well as our collaborative identity – every example we have dealt with in the dissertation in question, every idea we have explored reflects who we are as individuals, who we are as collaborators. In fact, we could argue that the particular perspective on literary authorship we opened in our work could not have been even considered by a solitary scholar – it was necessary to draw from our number as the basis of our identity in order to approach the subject of authorial responsibility in just the right manner (right, that is, for the purposes of our research).

In that sense, I can honestly say I did not receive any special type of help in the course of my studies at Case, nor in the writing of my dissertation – the subject of our research merely reflected in the way we approached that research, our method was not devised as a scheme to bend the University rules or break them. Similarly, the help the two of us as writing tutors gave to Case’s
undergraduate students did not represent a violation of academic policies, but when it came to students for whom English was a second language that help might have seemed greater than the help that native speakers required; when it came to students whose writing skills were not strong enough to even come up with an idea for their assignments that help might have seemed greater than the help that other students received. Considering that dissertation workshops are nowadays a standard practice, we can conclude that every student receives some help and assistance even at that final stage of academic development (here it should go without saying that every dissertation is based on the joint effort of a candidate and the dissertation committee, an effort that is essentially a form of collaboration regardless of what its official label might be).

The official position was that some of the individuals representing the university had failed, had been not vigilant enough in letting this collaboration come about, but the truth is that the university as an institution had in numerous ways encouraged collaboration in general and as a result made this (objectionable) collaboration more effective.

**UNIVERSITY AS THE BREEDING GROUND OF COLLABORATION**

When compared to universities in, for example, Europe, universities in the US appear to be organized to actively and directly promote collaboration on all levels, and in all areas, but particularly in the area of academic writing. Universities such as CWRU offer a formal framework for collaboration that cannot be found at similar institutions in most other countries. Without getting into what might be the reasons for this, or passing any sort of moral or qualitative judgment, it suffices to establish as a fact that here at CWRU, collaboration is a well-established norm, rather than an aberration. There are numerous modes of academic (and often interdisciplinary) collaborations that the University
actively encourages and endorses, or merely condones, some of which have also actively
influenced or shaped the text of this dissertation.

Required courses taken by each graduate student are probably among the more
obvious modes of collaboration practiced at the university. By being allowed to choose
his or her courses each student is allowed to express his or her academic affinities. In that
process, a student is communicating with a number of members of the faculty, each of
whom is offering significant ideas and input that may or may not end up in the student’s
future dissertation. What is more, in most, if not all courses students are not only allowed
but urged to select assignments that pertain, in greater or lesser part, to their dissertations.
Thus, in his or her two years of coursework a careful, goal-oriented student can
accumulate as much as 50\%\(^2\) of what will eventually become the text of his or her
dissertation. Every written assignment can provide a reference, a paragraph, possibly
even an entire chapter, and every written assignment is influenced by the instructor’s
guidance, comments, and suggestions, as well as feedback of peers. All those numerous
instances of collaboration slowly seep into what will finally become a dissertation, and
the same was true for this particular dissertation. In one of the very first courses each
Department of English student is required to take – Research Methods – the basic
bibliographical exercise concerning *The Whole Family*, a collaborative novel, yielded
information and sources that were almost in their entirety incorporated in this
dissertation.

\(^2\) This, of course, is merely an estimate. To quantify traces or instances of collaboration in any text is near
impossible and even if it would (or could) be attempted such an analysis could possibly amount to a
separate dissertation. Thus, in the context of this chapter, estimates will have to suffice, and a very rough
analysis will be provided later on, once all the modes of collaboration that had an impact on this text have
been enumerated and described.
Among programs that are truly representative of CWRU’s dedication to collaborative practices SAGES certainly stands out as exceptional example. Again, without evaluating this program in any way, here it simply suffices to note that courses taught by two co-instructors foster the notion that collaboration is a legitimate and oftentimes necessary academic method, especially in instances when different disciplines converge, as was the case in a digital storytelling class where the collaborators responsible for this dissertation served as storytelling ‘experts’ along one digitally-minded member of CWRU faculty. This relationship was in certain aspects more flexible than an average TA-ship, being more of a partnership than apprenticeship, but, as Ede and Lunsford established, collaboration is to be found in all work relationships, regardless of whether they are hierarchical or non-hierarchical.

Along with TA-ship, most graduate students work at the Writing Center, which is a veritable hub of collaboration. In their eight years as ‘a graduate student’ (both at Otis College and at CWRU) Natalija and Ognjen had four years of experience working as writing center tutors, helping native speakers and ESL students. Among both groups there had been students who specifically asked for them, which is an indication that they particularly benefited from an unusual dual perspective and double attention. But even an average tutor-student relationship is marked by a high level of collaboration in itself, and at CWRU, Writing Center services were openly and quite aggressively promoted. What is more, it was not unusual for the Department of English to forward inquiries of graduate students from other departments looking for proofreading and editing services, which would imply that a significant number of dissertations are, to a degree, products of collaboration, collaboration that is allowed and promoted by the University itself.
It could almost be argued that dissertations as such have the highest level of collaboration, much higher than average written assignments since they are complex text produced over a span of years, involving institutional advisory help and supervision. Here, the most informal type of collaboration exists between fellow students. Being familiar with the general direction this particular research was heading, on more than one occasion Natalija’s and Ognjen’s colleagues, as well as members of the Department of English faculty supplied them with information about new scholarly titles on the subject of collaboration, new collaborative literary projects, and news articles dealing with instances of literary collaboration. In almost all cases, these were ‘leads’ Natalija and Ognjen were not previously aware of, information that directly helped along the work on this dissertation.

Formally, there was, of course, the official dissertation advisor whose contribution is as significant as it is difficult to quantify. Each student is required to have one, along with the dissertation committee. Together they provided significant input, both constructive and regulatory, that was occasionally quite similar to the input provided by Natalija’s unofficial collaborator, that input which apparently (according to the AIB) contaminated this dissertation (or merely made the first defense irregular). Additionally, at the time when this dissertation was in progress, there was an optional, but no less official form of collaboration available – dissertation workshops allowed students to ‘test drive’ their dissertations. The author(s) of this dissertation did not participate in such workshops, since they were abroad at the time but, again, the type of collaboration these workshops offered could not have been very different than at least some of the
discussions and exchanges of opinions that were a staple of Natalija and Ognjen’s prohibited relationship.

Finally, not many dissertations are shaped by such feedback, and certainly no candidate desires it, but due to the formal charges of academic violations, the AIB could be seen as a sort of collaborative panel, since it decreed not only the alteration of existing chapters, and commissioned a new one, but it also dictated the very form of authorship of this dissertation, confirming that authorship is in fact declarative, but that the declaration of authorship occasionally (or, maybe, often) does not come from the authors themselves, but is forced upon them.

But the most profound mark of collaboration on this dissertation was left by a significant number of persons who were, who are completely unaware of it. The fact is that the essential points presented in it have also been suggested and discussed by other scholars. Some of them have even made similar or even the exact same claims – in those cases they were referring, perhaps, to the field of visual arts or art in general and not literature as such, hence applying them to the field of literature was certainly a form of collaboration. Others made claims referring to literature as such, but these claims may have been of a broader or narrower focus – in those instances, adjusting the focus of those claims to fit the context of this dissertation had also been a form of collaboration. Because, how does one learn? How does one create new knowledge? One finds out things. And how does one find out things? Most often from other people. This, at least, is the underlying principle of all literary scholarship. For a physicist, on the other side of his or her object of scientific observation there may be some unresponsive force, a force unable or unwilling to communicate, but for a literary scholar, on the other side of his or
her object of observation, on the other side of the text, there is always another human being, and the relationship is, at least as described in this particular text, always a form of collaboration.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF COLLABORATION IN THIS DISSERTATION

Here then the sheer number of potential and actualized, official and unofficial, direct and indirect types of collaboration implies that every dissertation is to a degree collaborative. At least for the sake of this particular argument this should be taken for granted even though, as already noted, a precise quantitative analysis of collaborativeness of any text is near impossible (and quite possibly futile). However, for the purpose of illustration an attempt of estimating the collaborativeness of this thesis might be useful. Again, this is only a very rough approximation, based on only the most obvious numbers.

To begin with, this dissertation (or its previous version, since this version is still being written at this point) is 244 pages long (roughly some 68,000 words). Its bibliography contains over 180 sources, or 220 authors (a particular city, as well as an undetermined number of Internet users were not counted to keep things at least superficially manageable). An average direct quote is possibly some 20-40 words long (some, of course, are much longer, but some are merely a word long). Most sources are quoted only once, but some are quoted more frequently, which means that there are roughly over 200 direct quotes in the entire dissertation, or at least 3,000 words of text that were not produced by the person defending this dissertation. Furthermore, there are at least half as many instances where the source is merely paraphrased. Paraphrases are usually lengthier than direct quotes, but even if that was not the case, they would account
for at least 1500 words written in collaboration with authors of respective sources. That should be an equivalent of at least 1,000 words that do not belong entirely to the person defending this thesis. Each quote, whether direct or paraphrased, was necessarily contextualized and integrated in the dissertation. For every word of quotation there are roughly two words placing it in the context of the dissertation itself (or 8,000 words). However, it would be fair to admit that this contextualization would not be possible without the original quote, which implies that authors of sources from which the quotes were taken are in some part responsible for the way their words were presented and employed in this text. For the sake of the argument, let this part be one fourth, or 2000 words. At this point, then, the person defending this dissertation cannot claim the authorship of at least 6,000 words, or little under 10% of the entire text, and this is a most conservative estimate to be sure.

Additionally, almost every page of this dissertation carries some mark of other individuals involved in its production – if all suggestions, comments, and corrections are taken into account, at least 10 words per page ‘belong’ to either members of the dissertation committee, instructors for whose classes parts of it were composed as term-papers, or fellow students who offered their feedback. This is 10 words per page, or at least 2,440 words. Added to those 6,000 words, the collaborative part of the dissertation is now already 8,440 words, or almost 12.5% of the entire thesis.

Then, there is the issue of the preface and this particular chapter, which were produced according to the strict ruling of the Academic Integrity Board. This, effectively makes the Board responsible for at least 25% of the preface and this chapter and at least 10% of the rest of the dissertation – this, roughly, is almost some 10,000 words, raising
the identifiably collaborative percentage of the dissertation to a full quarter. Now, if this
dissertation is imagined as an automobile, it is quite obvious how it would be useless
without one of its wheels.

Furthermore, the nature of writing itself as a practice, an activity, is such that a
significant part of what each person writes cannot be seen as an especially original
composition, but rather as automatized imitations of previously established models. In
academic writing, instances such as transitions between paragraphs, phrases used to set
up quotes, even models of introductions and organization of chapters are rather generic.
Together with other stock solutions for writing problems these must represent no less
than 25% of every text (more, if tools such as spellcheck and synonym search are
considered). And if that would by any chance be only one percent more, then the
‘majority ownership’ of this dissertation, or any other average scholarly text, belongs not
to the nominal author, but to the bulk of small shareholders.

Here it must also be noted that the rough draft of this text was much bulkier,
almost twice its current size. At the urging of the committee, entire chapters were
dropped, and some of the surviving chapters significantly truncated, which only proves
that even before any ‘forbidden’ type of collaboration is to be considered, this
dissertation (same as any other) was (and is) truly and even predominantly a collaborative
effort. This is to say that the total number of persons sharing responsibility for this text is
far greater than two, hence reducing it to only one person by an administrative decree
merely diminishes its value and relevance.

THE PROHIBITED TYPE OF COLLABORATION
Granted, the same level of collaborativeness might be found in any doctoral thesis – arguably even any other scholarly text. The issue with this particular dissertation was (or is) that the remaining 50 or 49% is also collaborative, which is the reason why it was previously rejected, why alterations and additions were requested, and why it will be re-defended. There are, to be sure, examples of joint dissertations – otherwise at CWRU there would not exist the rule preventing them – but, again, those were considered to be joint dissertations because each of the (co)authors pursued an academic degree. Here, Kami Day’s and Michele Eodice’s *First Person*²: *A Study of Co-Authoring in the Academy* offers valuable information. Not as rare as red wolf or Javan rhinoceros, joint dissertations are a pretty rare species, with only 166 spotted between 1902 and 1987 (Day & Eodice 12). However, even those were true joint dissertations in the sense that each of the (co)authors received a degree for his or her effort.

What makes this particular dissertation rather unique – apart from the fact that one person involved in its writing was, from an official standpoint, wasting his time – is the fact that its authors took collaboration to an extreme, or just different level, sharing every single step of the required academic process, until the very last one, which one of them is now expected to retake. In its essence this type of collaboration – deemed irregular by the very institution that facilitated it – was (and is) very simple. It was developed long before Natalija Grgorinić and Ognjen Rađen came to CWRU. As far as an academic environment is concerned, their approach was tested during their time at Otis College of Art & Design where they were, under rather similar conditions as at CWRU, ‘a student’ enrolled in the MFA creative writing program. Officially, only Natalija had been registered, but the two attended (and consequently taught) all classes together and worked
together on all assignments including the final one, a creative thesis. Of course, at the time of their arrival to Otis, they had already been writing exclusively together for some eight years, and had published two novels, so by the time they were accepted at CWRU they had ten years of experience of writing together, writing fiction as well as scholarly papers, literary criticism as well as journalistic pieces. As a matter of fact, for them ‘writing’ meant ‘writing together,’ and they made this quite clear in their (or, officially, Natalija’s) PhD application (particularly in the statement of purpose). The underlining principle of this type of writing is shared experience: anything an individual writer (or, in academic terms, an individual student) experiences, they had experienced together, not for the purpose of dividing the experience, but for the purpose of doubling it. The reason for this doubling of experience is to gather more information (than an individual might gather), to observe situations, issues, occurrences from two vantage points, to approach problems, assignments, challenges from two directions, to compare what are basically two understandings of the same experience, discuss the experience, analyze it, re-experience it through direct dialogue, and as a result to gain more from each shared experience.

In this sense, and in terms of academic practice, this method was not a shortcut towards any practical goal, assignments were not miraculously produced twice faster than in cases of individual students, this dissertation was not completed in record time. If anything, for Natalija and Ognjen every assignment demanded twice as much time and energy as it would for an individual student. Arguably, more than twice as much. In the concrete example of the dissertation in question this meant that each of them examined every source listed in the bibliography, as well as investigated numerous other leads that
were in the end left out. What each of them gathered from one source was not necessarily
the same thing which meant that they often had to revisit such sources to acquire a more
complete understanding of its worth and relative usefulness. All findings were discussed
and evaluated in direct conversation, all notes were aggregated and compared. Every
idea, every notion, every concept that ended up in the final text of the dissertation was
examined by both Natalija and Ognjen, and what one of them suggested, the other
reexamined and challenged. In this way both Natalija and Ognjen went through all the
phases of researching and writing of the dissertation. There was not one stage in the
process that was skipped by either of them. In other words, the work was not split in half
– after all this would effectively annul the true meaning of collaboration, as defined in
this very dissertation, which is to share the total experience (either creative or scholarly),
and not to cut work in half in order to complete it in less time and with less effort.

When it comes to actual writing or composing of the dissertation, both Natalija
and Ognjen preformed it. But, again, this does not mean that each wrote one half of it. As
noted earlier, a significant part of the earliest draft submitted to the dissertation advisor,
and later to the dissertation committee was left out of this version. But even that earliest
draft shared with the committee did not contain all the writing produced during the entire
process. What is more, what each of them contributed in writing might have been
originally her or his idea, particularly since the course of the discussion (that preceded
any act of writing) left no idea unchanged – as a result of discussions any mark of
‘original ownership’ was erased, each idea became Natalija’s as much as Ognjen’s. The
same, in the process of revision, became true for the written text – each paragraph, each
sentence, each term was evaluated, rephrased, reshuffled, and manipulated in every
possible way by both Natalija and Ognjen, hence each of them can be considered the
author of the entire text and not only the author of one half of it. This logic certainly
defies mathematical view of collaboration as a relationship in which if two people are
identified as equal authors of the same text they each must be responsible for only one
half of it. However, collaborative authorship, at least as described in this dissertation, is
anything but mathematically determinable. As Day and Eodice note, “[b]y the time most
successful projects are completed, the co-authors most often cannot even identify
individual crafting of words, sentences, or sections. But they can talk about intellectual
contributions, what they themselves have learned from the project, and their commitment
to taking their work public” (33). What is more, when the definition of collaboration is
expanded to include authors, or writers, or editors, readers, translators etc. each text
becomes capable of absorbing any number of them, erasing the boundaries that exist
between them as distinguishable individuals.

As already mentioned, a certain level of collaborativeness is taken for granted. In
sharing a part of the work with Ognjen (who had no official role) Natalija has apparently
surpassed that level, the level tolerated by the institution. As a rule, collaboration is
tolerated when roles under which it is realized are formalized and institutionalized, when
proper forms are filled out, signed, and filed. This, out of all examples of overt
collaboration examined in this dissertation, was most apparent in the case of Dorris and
Erdrich who relied on a wide set of roles to normalize their collaboration and bring it
closer to the mainstream idea of singular authorship supported by the publishing
apparatus. In the earliest stage of their collaboration, Erdrich was the writer while Dorris
assumed multiple roles of a co-architect (Chavkin & Chavkin 5), on-hand editor, “her
agent” (Chavkin & Chavkin 11), “her manager” (Chavkin & Chavkin 57), “critic” (Chavkin & Chavkin 66), “a spiritual guide, a therapist” (Chavkin & Chavkin 116), “a suggester” (Chavkin & Chavkin 121), and “the talker, the spokesman for the collaboration” (Chavkin & Chavkin 163), all of which may or may not be imbued with a certain degree of authority. The list of Dorris’ roles in his relationship with Erdrich, at least as described by critics focusing exclusively on her literary accomplishments, resembles, for example, the list of roles assumed by Eugen Boissevain in his marriage to Edna St. Vincent Millay: “He served and guarded Edna like a priest of a temple. He cooked, washed dishes, kept house, was gardener and chauffeur, business manager, banker, engineer, and everything else besides lover and husband and the best friend she ever had” (Vincent Sheean, qtd. in Irving to Irving 237). However, the problem with the authorship of this dissertation is that Ognjen’s contribution cannot be recognized under any of the previously mentioned established roles (dissertation advisor, member of the committee, faculty member, fellow student etc.), which served as a grounds for AIB’s decision to treat Ognjen as Natalija’s source, rather than her unofficial (or maybe non-academic) partner.

The fact is that the process of Natalija and Ognjen’s collaborative relationship has not been documented (outside of this dissertation). Hence, there is no other record other than the dissertation itself. Natalija did not interview Ognjen, nor did she become familiar with his ideas indirectly by way of a scholarly article published under his name alone. Their relationship is not documented enough to be a project of its own that would consequently become the subject (one of the subjects) of this thesis. For all practical purposes, none of the ‘original’ ideas presented in this dissertation have existed prior to
being conceived by Natalija and Ognjen together. It would probably please the Academic Integrity Board as well as the Dissertation Committee evaluating this dissertation to learn that all ideas were developed exclusively by Natalija, yet even regardless of their origin none of the ideas in question exist on their own, but are instead supported by the ideas of other scholars who have looked into the character of literary authorship.

Here, the most obvious difference between Ognjen and those ‘sources’ is that Natalija had no opportunity to engage with them in a face-to-face conversation. Of course, turning the entire dissertation into a Socratic dialogue, with Natalija presented as a Socrates and Ognjen as, for example, Phaedrus would be somewhat comical, possibly even absurd, though not entirely farfetched, since in its essence this dissertation is a complex conversation, where the direct speech has been transformed into a sort of reported speech with any visible boundaries between interlocutors being erased for the sake of fluency and expediency. This, however, does not mean that Ognjen produced an individual text that Natalija could quote in her dissertation. After all, in such a text, even if it would exist, Ognjen would have to quote Natalija who would in turn end up quoting herself. Consequently, the revised text of this dissertation does not contain any sections that are identifiably and exclusively Ognjen’s, simply because there aren’t any—there had not been any to begin with—which means that Ognjen’s contribution has been and is as impossible to measure as it is immeasurable.

In that respect, collaboration essentially cannot be controlled, prevented, or prohibited, since its basis is dialogue, conversation, ordinary human interaction. The AIB cannot prevent a student from discussing his or her dissertation with whomever he or she chooses, even if he or she is reaping the benefit of that discussion. After all, as noted, this
is one of the main ways in which human beings learn, one of the main ways in which new
test knowledge is created, not to mention, one of the main human liberties. As an illustration,
a hypothetical case, maybe one from the natural sciences that are seemingly more exact,
might be of help. Let us say that a young scholar is pondering the nature of black holes.
He or she already has certain knowledge of black holes, has even identified an interesting
and important problem regarding black holes. He or she mentions that problem to his or
her friend, or even intimate partner. The partner, with absolutely no desire to act the part
of a reputable source suggests a solution to the problem. The young scholar decides to
follow the lead and in the course of his or her inquiry as well as in subsequent
conversations with his or her partner (who is now actively a collaborator) discovers that
the solution is indeed the one he or she has been looking for. This is, to be sure, not an
exact analogy of Natalija and Ognjen’s relationship, but its certain aspects fit their model.
For one, Ognjen had no formal academic ambitions, but the two shared (and continue to
share) same preoccupations regarding literary authorship, the practice as well as the
theory. Entering a PhD program was a way of testing these ideas, as well as making use
of the resources and environment that can (almost exclusively) be found in institutions of
higher learning such as CWRU. But that in no way implied that the conversation between
the two should suddenly cease.

In this context, then, the authorship of this dissertation should be understood as a
conversation of a sort, particularly since prior to the decision of the Academic Integrity
Board Natalija and Ognjen had practiced writing as a mode of mutual communication for
some fourteen years. For this reason it is also quite impossible to separate their individual
contributions. After all, as it had been shown in the earlier chapters, such textual autopsy
is usually the work of the critics. But the reason why a truly collaborative text cannot ever be divided in its constitutive elements, each with a single, identifiable author is simply because when divided in such a fashion it no longer functions as a text. In the example of this particular dissertation and its earlier (officially rejected) version, the problem is further compounded by the fact that its composition had been a far longer process than the average composition of a doctoral thesis. As noted in the preface, not that many students join a doctoral program with an already drafted outline of their future dissertation, and it is safe to assume that none of them are admitted to that program along with their partners. However, any attempt to extract this thesis out of some fifteen years of creative dialogue, would necessarily result in a text that would speak against itself, a text that effectively negates itself. Because, if a person is considering writing a text the point of which is to establish that all texts are collaborative, and if that person has already been previously collaborating on numerous other texts with one particular other person, then it would be preposterous to expect that person to avoid collaboration in writing that text, and both cruel and unusual to punish that person for resorting to collaboration.

THE ISSUE OF INTELLECTUAL OR SCHOLARLY INTEGRITY

Surely, then, if the description of the collaboration that resulted in this dissertation is considered, the question should be asked what is that the AIB found so objectionable and, more importantly, why is it that joint dissertations are not permitted to begin with. The same question was asked by Mark Hurlbert who collaborated and continues to collaborate with his colleague Michael Blitz on scholarly work in the field of composition:
Given the number of scholars in composition who are collaborating on a regular basis, it is only a matter of time until collaborative dissertations become a regular practice. Indeed, it is strange that there is still such resistance to the idea of collaborative dissertations. One can only wonder what motivates this resistance; in fact, wouldn’t it be interesting to research and report the sources of this resistance so the profession could make its own determinations on these people and their motives?

(Day & Eodice 152)

There are a number of possible reasons why collaboration has not been fully embraced in academia and why it has been ostracized in the humanities. Obviously, the universities would not necessarily profit from awarding two degrees for the price of one. Such a ‘discount’ approach would require changes in policies, but more importantly changes in ways dissertations are evaluated, especially since there is still certain prestige (not to mention price tag) associated with graduate degrees. Alternatively, the degrees awarded for collaborative work could be perceived as having lesser values than those earned by single students. What is more, collaborative dissertations could, arguably, allow one person to do less work (or no work at all) for his or her degree. Thus, it seems that the biggest fear when it comes to collaboration in academia lies in the notion that it would somehow legalize intellectual theft and dishonesty, endangering proprietary rights of individuals. As Day and Eodice note, “resistance to co-authoring is often based on a deep-seated belief that individual rights of ownership will be corrupted or compromised, posing a threat to historical markers of authorship” (Day & Eodice 34). This “deep-seated belief” comes from, on one hand, the notion that every single piece of text is attributable, or that it should be attributable, and on the other that every text can or should be treated as potential property. Such a view effectively prevents, for example, this dissertation
from ever being considered 100% Natalija’s while at the same time being 100% Ognjen’s – if dealing with texts as property with identifiable owners, every collaboration results only in part-ownership, and consequently part-authorship, which in the context of graduate dissertation also means insufficient authorship.

Furthermore, if someone is seen as merely a part-author, or a half-author, his or her identity (or individuality) is also undermined – that is to say, collaborators are robbed of the right to self-expression since they (each, individually) are not individually recognized s agents who have full authority over the text for which they choose to assume responsibility. Because, rather than being a question of ownership, all authorship is a question of identity, and while the traditional view may be that identities are fixed (almost) at birth, as well as that there is only one identity per person, collaboration indicates that this is not the case, but that identities are created in interaction with others, that they are highly volatile, and, most importantly, that they are always plural.

This is consistent with what Jerome McGann suggests when stating: “The universe of literature is socially generated and does not exist in a steady state. Authors themselves do not have, as authors, singular identities, an author is a plural identity and more resembles what William James liked to call the human world at large, a multiverse” (The Textual Condition 75). Consequently, it is this plurality of identity that allows collaborators to claim full authorship of their texts, each of them individually and all of them collectively, since their identities are a product of constant interaction with one another. If, for the sake of the argument, one would take a snapshot of that interaction between two people, it would not necessarily show an even 50/50 split of ideas between partners, but exactly because of their relationship each of them could claim full
responsibility for the product of their interaction. The same can be claimed for ideas presented in this particular text, which allows it to be 100% Natalija’s dissertation, while at the same time being 100% Ognjen’s work, and which makes it impossible to separate their individual contributions without negating the effort of either of them.

THE ISSUE OF LEGITIMACY

As an imperfect text (or, as suggested in the preface, a non-text), this dissertation will appear only in this particular instance, for the practical purpose of advancing one person (and one person only) beyond PhD candidacy. In its current form it has not been used for that same purpose, nor will it serve that purpose ever again. However, as a text, it combines ideas and knowledge of many people, most of whom are clearly identified, that is, all those that can be identified, yet for that particular purpose stated above only one person is identified as its author. If the content of this dissertation is taken into account, if the ideas expressed in it are accepted as valid, that one person cannot possibly be considered as the only author of this text. However, since this is a non-text, at least as far as its institutional function is concerned, and since the regulation of the institution in question dictate that only one person assumes responsibility for this document, only one person is referred to as the dissertation’s exclusive author (though at the same time not the exclusive author of this dissertation’s text).

Looking back at the previous defense, the only problem seems to have been that two people assumed equal responsibility for the text of the dissertation and appeared to have assumed equal responsibility for the dissertation as a document (though formally even then only one person assumed responsibility for the dissertation as such, for the
dissertation as an academic document). The truth of the matter is that there are two individuals both (and each) quite capable of doing that, but also that only one of these two individuals ever sought to receive an academic degree on the basis of the ideas presented in this dissertation. Therefore, it would seem, the need for the pending (re)defense. Therefore, the need for the author(s) of this dissertation to be reduced to one person, and its authorship to be simplified and individualized in spite the circumstances of its composition and the ideas it puts forward. This time around, only one person, the person who is actually pursuing the degree, will defend the dissertation, and this will, hopefully, satisfy all institutional requirements (though this by no means implies that the individuals representing the institution will find the defense adequate) and finally legitimize the entire project. Hopefully, its end result turns out to be more than a mere diploma with one name on it. Hopefully, the attitude towards collaboration at CWRU gets reexamined and reformed to allow both students and members of the faculty to freely interact in their scholarly pursuits. As Day and Eodice put it, “[p]erhaps if academia could look at dissertations not as a hoop to be jumped through, a convention to be mastered, a tradition to be perpetuated, but as an opportunity for innovation, discovery, and real joy that comes with authentic learning—perhaps then co-authored dissertations would make more sense” (Day & Eodice 164). And, perhaps, the impetus for such a fundamental change comes from this university.
Conclusion

The crucial challenge in imagining collaboration as the basis of artistic creativity, especially in the context of those types of art that rely the most on the solitary laborer, lies in reconciling the notion of collaboration as the underlying principle of the human society with the feats of individual effort that capture one’s attention when turning to history of literature, or visual art, or, perhaps, classical music. It is as if there is no apparent connection between the wide shot of the humanity flooding the frame both in terms of time and space, seemingly as organized and hectic as an ant colony, and the close-up of a solitary individual absorbed in an act of creativity. To be sure, a society in which every single individual member would be consumed in his or her own separate project, following his or her own unique agenda, could hardly function as a society. On the other hand, producing art or, more precisely, literature in the manner of assembling the Ford Model T would effectively depersonalize it, both for the writer and the reader. In other words, it is not that hard to find merit in M. Thomas Inge’s hypothesis: “Perhaps the nature of culture is collaboration” (qtd. in Karell xiii), but it is very hard to recognize that same “nature” in the solitary activity of a stereotypical writer seeking refuge from the rest of the world in order to better express him or herself, in order to create freely. This thesis has hopefully indicated that, on one hand, individuality is retained in a mass of any size, but also that there are at least traces of collectivity in the most solitary activity. At the same time, its goal had not been to re-label or unmask literary works that are celebrated as feats of unparallel individuality. As Wayne Koestenbaum claims, “bringing collaborative authorship to the fore shows each work, whether canonical or noncanonical,
in a new light. *The Waste Land*, for example, sounds less masterful, more vacillating, in this new context of other works by two men” (Koestenbaum 4). Consequently, rather than repackaging products of literary “master[y],” this thesis has provided alternatives to imagining what this “mastery” implies or, more precisely, has showed that every attempt at any type of literary activity necessarily brings an individual into a relationship with other individuals, the result of which is not only a degree of creativity but also at least some degree of collaboration—or, in other words, that the processes that are responsible for the perception of literature as a whole are also, at least to an extent, responsible for every individual literary text.

This constitutes a step forward from the majority of research dealing with the collaborative(ness of) authorship. Most significantly, this thesis is an attempt not to fall back on the singularity of authorship as a ‘necessary illusion,’ which is a maneuver shared by almost all who have looked into the potential implications of pluralizing authorship. As Jack Stillinger explains (as noted in the introduction to this dissertation)…

… the myth of single authorship is a great convenience for teachers, students, critics, and other readers, as well as for publishers, agents, booksellers, librarians, copyright lawyers—indeed, for everyone connected with the production and reception of books, starting with the authors themselves. The myth is thoroughly embedded in our culture and our ordinary practices, including the ordinary practices of criticism and interpretation, for which, I would argue, it is an absolute necessity. The countering reality of multiple authorship is no threat to the continuing existence of the myth, nor is there any compelling reason for wanting the myth to cease to exist.

(Stillinger 187)
True enough, there may not be “any compelling reason for wanting the myth to cease to exist,” since myths always retain some purpose or value regardless of whether they are believed in or not, regardless of whether they belong to the dominant mythology or archaic lore. However, this myth of solitary authorship should definitely be put aside to further examine “[t]he countering reality of multiple authorship,” and by doing so open new ways of perceiving as well as creating literature.

Although, for example, widely disseminated machine-made texts are still a somewhat distant future, experiments such as Racter, “the Poetic Computer,” indicate that the responsibility for a particular text is necessarily shared, since when there is no longer any ‘human’ writer, or nominal author, the task of “provid[ing]” or creating the meaning lies exclusively with the reader (James Ledbetter, qtd. in Ede & Lunsford 68). That is to say, the true distribution of responsibility for a particular text only becomes visible when the figure of the author is replaced by a non-human entity, whether it be a piece of computer software or a corporation (as in examples of texts produced by book packaging companies), or even a Foucaultian “function.” Indeed, by proclaiming the symbolical “death of the author,” Barthes produced the effect that just might be compared to letting a computer (software) write poems: the most immediate reaction of the (critical) public was not to accept Barthes’ claim as a fact, but to look for human engineers and operators behind the machine of language, to open the curtains and see who is exactly pulling the levers that control “the great and powerful Oz.” One line of this inquiry has led to an entire branch of literary and cultural studies—the history of books—that discovered the plurality of subjects as a necessary consequence of the material aspects of the system of literature. Another approach, the follow here, suggested that the examples
of overt collaborative authorship could broaden the understanding of all literary authorship, even the seemingly most solitary one. In fact, continuing where scholars such as Wayne Koestenbaum, Jack Stillinger, Linda Karell, Bette London, Loraine York, Holly Laird, and others have left off, this dissertation has presented the view of literature with the starting premise that all authorship is in fact, to a lesser or greater degree, collaborative.

Thus, the broadest implication of the theory outlined in the previous chapters would be to observe literary authorship as an open process, an open invitation to participate in the creation of meaning of a particular text, and as a result an invitation to participate in the creation of that text or other, new texts. By sharing this ‘authorial’ responsibility for any given text, an individual also shares responsibility for literature as a whole. At the same time, by retaining the very category of authorship, the aspect of human participation is emphasized. Or as Jack Stillinger puts it, “… perhaps the single most important aspect of authorship is simply the vaguely apprehended presence of human creativity, personality, and (sometimes) voice that nominal authorship seems to provide… it is impossible to imagine any presentation of writings… that does not prominently refer to authorship” (Stillinger 186). Consequently, once literary authorship is seen as a shared process, the responsibility of those who participate in it is not merely literary (not merely responsibility towards the text), but is also a moral responsibility towards other participants in that process, to other participants in the literary exchange.

However, in order to move the discussion of collaborative(ness of) authorship to this, the broadest level, one first had to look into the ways in which collaboration is (most) frequently observed. Namely, to deal with metaphorical descriptions that (overt)
collaboration too often inspires, descriptions that almost as a rule avoid the practical challenges of shared writing (and the resulting shared authorship) and tend to (over)romanticize it. Among those, the metaphor of collaborative writing as marriage is by far the most frequent one, though collaboration is often presented in terms of “mothering the mind” (by Ruth Perry and Martine Watson Brownly), “metaphors of closeness, intimacy, intertwining, and reciprocity” (by Bette London), or even “metaphorical sexual intercourse” (Wayne Koestenbaum), which does emphasize the emotional as well as relational aspect of collaboration, but often at the expense of its professional or literary impact. Hence, this is also a move away from the practice of subjecting collaboration to a type of rhetoric that frames creative relationships in the ready-made moulds of conjugal, domestic, and sexual relationships, as well as an attempt to emphasize the need for a new vocabulary of collaboration that would be as free as possible from unhelpful, if not detrimental ideological implications.

From there the focus shifted on the very process of writing as the basis of literary creation, but also a process that is often confused with the notion of authorship. More precisely, the analysis turned towards the ways in which the idea(l) of solitary authorship infiltrates and influences even the overtly collaborative writing partnerships, creating somewhat of a paradox of declarative collaboration resulting in nominal singularity (as in the case of Dorris and Erdrich). All the examples illustrated instances in which the idea of (solitary) authorship burdens the process of (collaborative) writing, and even prevents it from fully developing. Consequently, this hopefully provided in some small part additional evidence for the case against the traditional institution of individualized, singular authorship.
Furthermore, an attempt was made to define authorship in terms of shared responsibility both for the text, and the other participants in the literary exchange. The name of the author as such has been recognized as the symbol of that plural responsibility: not a certificate by which all responsibility is awarded to or forced upon one (often imaginary) person, but a sign of the presence of the other in or behind the text. This, among other things, points out the importance of the distinction between literary writing and authorship, a distinction that seems almost to suggest that the consideration of the latter is redundant. However, unlike the writing of Barthes or Foucault, this dissertation does not present a case for the ‘redundancy’ or dismissal of authorship, nor a motion to rub out the author or to transform the author into a function, simply because authorship is treated as much more than a glorified synonym for writing. On the contrary, here authorship becomes as a term under which all literary or text-induced activity can be grouped, a term that denotes a type of relationship (or even fellowship) resulting from the interaction of numerous, different individuals with one particular text.

After all, if authorship and collaboration are defined in terms of relationship with the text as the substitute for the other, every type of literary activity can be recognized as a contribution to either the text itself or the literary discourse that develops around a particular text, the literary discourse that brings this particular text into contact with other texts. This is why the emphasis of the dissertation has been on the dyadic relationship, the relationship that each person establishes with a particular text, offering it as a model according to which collaboration occurs and is maintained even when there is no direct contact between individual participants. To be sure, this model is intended to describe a great number of relationships and activities that imply varying degrees of overt,
immediate collaboration, varying degrees of active participation in the actual writing of the text in question, but more importantly, it is intended to describe the necessary balance between, on one side, literary text (or language as the medium of literary creativity) and, on the other, those participants in the literary exchange who interact with the text (or creatively employ language). In other words, this dyadic model is a potential (and possibly even necessary) compromise between the author-centric view of literature, one that was merely forced to retreat (and regroup) with the advent of (post)structuralism, and the text-centric (or language-centric) view of literature that was only really tested in the postmodernist literary practice, a compromise that, at least to a degree, accounts for both the material and abstract aspects of the literary text, as well as the writerly and the readerly involvement with it.

To conclude, it would be useful to turn once again to Linda Karell who suggests that “[t]he collaborative notion of authorship does not destroy authorship; it resituates it” (Karell 60). After all, observing literary authorship as a form of collaboration, or even a process with varying degrees of collaboration at the same time promotes the text itself as a point around which the literary activity is oriented, as well as the respective efforts of each individual participant in that relationship. But, what is equally important, it also opens up space to observe literature as both private and public communication, private and public collaboration—that is recorded (or manifested) to a varying degree in each individual text. In this context, literary authorship is no longer an exclusive category reserved for gifted individuals or a particular caste of professionals but a process through which individuals exchange ideas, create language, and encounter one another.
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