

*Kathleen Blake Yancey and
Michael Spooner*

**A Single Good Mind:
Collaboration, Cooperation,
and the Writing Self**

Vignette: Honor and Ichabod

Preparing to sign off on the term paper that's almost overdue, I assemble the onion-sheets, clean, almost papyrus in their texture, collectively re/producing

Professor Johnson's paper: a critical review of David Copperfield. Don't talk about what you liked, don't talk about how you felt reading it, don't talk about how it's like other novels you've read. Just don't talk: the honor code prohibits that. All of which means: figure out what my Ichabod Crane wants, read the text his way, write his paper, type it, submit.

*I don't talk to anyone, although potential discussants abound. Down the hall, there's Terri, who has already aced the course; Jeanne, not an English major, but a good writer; Karen, usually stoned but smart, always seeing things a little cock-eyed (maybe it's the drugs, maybe not). I like the novel. I want to talk about it—about how it's like *Great Expectations* in surprising ways, about how Dickens doesn't seem to like women much, about how these novels seem to end in a mighty convenient way. Still, I'm dutifully silent—except for asking Jeanne the date of Dickens's birth and the number of novels he wrote.*

Paper crisply typed, I flip to the last page, anxious about making class on time, anxious about whether it's right, anxious about whether it seems even so good that he'll think I cheated—talked

On my honor, I have neither given nor received help on this paper.

Kathleen A. Blake, 1969

The very nature of scholarship sets up a complex dynamic whose richness infers the collaborative process...

(McNenny and Roen 300)

Michael Spooner is director of the Utah State University Press, and *Kathleen Blake Yancey* is an associate professor of English at UNC-Charlotte. These collaborators have written other articles (published either in print or online) addressing issues of textuality, technology, and collaboration. They write together separately by email.

to someone maybe. Just thinking about it makes my hands sweat, the sweat makes the paper blotchy, the blotchiness announces my criminal intent, if not the actual crime. I'm guilty unless/until/perhaps even if I sign.

I sign.

Indefinite Definitions

The literature on collaboration includes several calls for accounts of collaborative writing (e.g., McNenny and Roen). Such accounts are important, theorists say, for while we know that many academic writers are composing together, we still seem to know precious little about how this joint composing is being managed, about the processes that go into collaborative writing.

Accounts of the process are important also because, at the same time composition teachers and scholars are promoting collaboration inside the classroom and out, our academic institutional structures continue to punish it as a dishonorable "giving or receiving help." Our ways of handing out grades, or promotion and tenure, are not informed by our best thinking on writerly collaboration. And this may be only a little less true for publishing scholars than it is for students.

We can generalize somewhat about process, however. In the accounts that do exist, there seem to be two major strands: what the experts do—e.g., Ede and Lunsford—and what the students do—e.g., Flower. And then there is a kind of hybrid with both of these participants—Susan Miller (Anderson et al.) and Himley et al. Despite the variations, however, these are just variations: we're still without the definitions, critique, and articulation of the range of collaborative engagement that one might wish for.

The meaning of the term "collaborative writing" is far from self-evident. (Ede and Lunsford 14)

[A]ll writing is inherently collaborative. (Thralls 79)

The term collaboration implies a conscious mutuality by which individuals of somewhat equal standing work in conjunction with one another toward a unified purpose. (Sperling 227)

Well, it's tough to be definitive in a world of rhetoricians. However, Janis Forman's *New Visions* does collect a range of thoughtful papers, and in *Writing With*, Reagan, Fox and Bleich offer another set. Both these texts bear traces

of the earlier, equally thoughtful, work that you mention. On the whole, however, one might wish for more specificity of terms.

It would be especially useful for the field to stabilize what we mean by collaboration. However, to do this (naturally) implies a critique of the construct of collaboration that predominates now, showing it at odds with the claims for it.

(A critique, but surely in the spirit of the Ur-collaborative. No agonistics here—wink wink, nudge nudge.)

And, since we write together online (cf. "Postings on a Genre of Email"), the uniquenesses we encounter there suggest, to you at least, that a unique variety of collaboration is possible there (though not *necessary*), and that it brings with it a unique aesthetic.

Actually, I thought you suggested this. Do you suppose there is any way to trace this back to the singular, definitive source?

The window into this discussion, critique, will be the same as the window used by many: an account of our own collaborative process, our developing sense of definition and identity in collaborative writing.

One of the key arguments supporting collaboration has been that it allows a constructivist, collective kind of knowledge-making process that is faithful to and takes advantage of a postmodern, multivocal, Bakhtinian understanding of how we "create" knowledge. James Reither and Douglas Vipond make this case, for example, articulating what they see as the three forms or processes that collaborative writing can take: coauthoring; workshoping; and knowledge-making. Only the last of these do they see as "essential," given their view that all knowing is a conversation, the "gaps" in which any new text seeks to fill. They also locate their observations within the framework offered in James

On the other hand, writing instructors tend to use the term collaboration normatively to refer to pedagogical techniques to transform the social relationships in the classroom. (Trimbur and Braun 34)

...two or more people working together to produce one written document in a situation in which a group takes responsibility for having produced the document. (Bosley 6)

"To cooperate treasonably, as with the enemy occupying one's country." (American Heritage Dictionary, qtd in Schilb 106)

Porter's description of meaning: what they call *intertextual traces*, "the bits and pieces of Text which writers or speakers borrow and sew together to create new discourse" (34). This view of collaboration also seems much like that defined by Monseau, Gerlach, and McClure in their "The Making of a Book"; they are particularly interested in how to "arrive harmoniously at a written product" written in a "blended" voice (67). This could be called *old style/paradigmatic collaboration*: while the processes involve multiple authorship, the text itself is pretty much the same as it would be in a single authorship venture.

McNenny and Roen outline what amounts to an early catalog of general conceptions and attitudes:

- collaboration is (almost inherently) good (300–302);
- collaboration is ubiquitous; it is process, is product, is consciousness itself, is pedagogy and workplace and teams and authorship (303–304);
- without collaboration, we are reduced to social isolation and alienation (304);
- there are some (resistant souls) who are just barely "able to acknowledge even the slight possibility that collaboration might work" (293).

There's a good question embedded in the last point here: when collaboration "works," what happens? Especially if McNenny and Roen's other points are accurate: if it's ubiquitous, it's always working, no? The contrast between collaboration that works and collaboration that doesn't would be interesting to play out.

Multivalent Texts/Ambivalent Authors

By now, *Singular Texts/Plural Authors* is a standard reference in studies of collaborative writing, so it is useful to look at how collaboration is defined there. Early on, Ede and Lunsford decide that their working definition of collaborative writing should be fairly general—equivalent to "group writing" (14). Working from this inclusive theoretical position, they eventually uncover two major modes of collaboration, which they call "the hierarchical" and "the dialogic." These have been cited frequently:

This [hierarchical] form of collaboration is carefully, and often rigidly, structured, driven by highly specific goals, and carried out by people playing clearly defined and delimited roles. . . . Because productivity and efficiency are of the essence in this mode of collaboration,

the realities of multiple voices and shifting authority are seen as difficulties to be overcome or resolved. . . .

[The] dialogic mode is loosely structured, and the roles enacted within it are fluid: one person may occupy multiple and shifting roles as a project progresses. . . . [T]hose participating in dialogic collaboration generally value the creative tension inherent in multivoiced and multivalent ventures. (Ede and Lunsford 133)

Interestingly, if we jump back several chapters, we see that these two modes are prefigured in responses to survey questions about the time that group writing requires. Ede and Lunsford's survey uncovered two conflicting opinions. On the one hand, most respondents to the survey felt that group writing was efficient, a time-saver, and helped to spread out the work (61).

On the other hand, a minority of respondents complained that collaboration was actually *time-intensive*, and this struck Ede and Lunsford as strange, anomalous (61). They speculate about these writers' need for control, about possible management problems, about problematic "interpersonal skills and group dynamics." Ultimately, they imply that these respondents just showed the resistance of "hierarchical" personalities to "dialogic" situations.

But throughout this I get the sense of a false opposition. Ede and Lunsford advocate the dialogic mode, and they associate the hierarchical (perhaps hierarchy in general) with inequity. But it seems the first set of respondents were content with their groups' focus on efficiency and division of labor—which actually belong to the *hierarchical* mode—while, conversely, the second set of respondents were feeling oppressed by the *dialogic* style of their groups.

I wonder if beginning with a more specific treatment of collaboration itself might have offered an explanation for both the two modes of writing and the two opinions about time. That is, if for Ede and Lunsford "group" and "collaborative" were not equivalent by definition, then "dialogic" and "hierarchical" could be seen as two modes of group writing, but "dialogic" might be collaborative and "hierarchical" might not—without the stigma of intellectual rigidity and interpersonal failure.

John B. Smith, in bringing more clarity to the term “collective intelligence” as it is used in a number of disciplines, draws a useful distinction between collaboration and cooperation:

Collaboration carries with it the expectation of a singular purpose and a seamless integration of the parts, as if the conceptual object were produced by a single good mind.... The reader is unable to tell from internal clues which chapters or sections were written by which authors.

Cooperative work is less stringent in its demands for intellectual integration. It requires that the individuals that comprise a group ...carry out their individual tasks in accord with some larger plan. However, in a cooperative structure, the different individuals... are not required to know what goes on in the other parts of the project, so long as they carry out their own assigned tasks satisfactorily. (2-3)

So in order for the process to be considered “collaborative,” it has to bear these characteristics? Not the same as the master narrative of collaboration-as-group-work-of-whatever-kind.

But then, what many accounts of collaborative writing don’t see is that—though they lay claim to the master narrative—they don’t in the specifics of their accounts support the narrative. They underscore it as mythology. For example, ownership—a rather anti-collaborative concept—still seems pretty important even to collaborative scholars.

In the competitive structure of academe, it has to do with credit or blame or maybe just accountability. And this works better for the tenure review committee, if they care.

You write that section; I’ll write this one. Stay on your own side of the page, and don’t forget the dean is watching.

They care.

Consequently, even ardent collaborators struggle with the ownership dimension of collaboration. If you’ll notice, the practice described by many seems both celebratory of and resistant to collaboration at the same time: a reflection perhaps of what we all feel—the tug and pleasure of working together in tension with the need to receive individual credit in a meritocracy. So

what they trace is demarcated both in process and product. That's a big part of the Monseau et al. chapter, for example, and of Reither's and Vipond's paper. Writers want collaboration and want separate identities, too.

In a sense, it's a refusal to let the needs of the text and the audience shape what we do, a refusal to let the "we" become a collective singular. Not very postmodern, I know—but maybe Barthes was wrong, and the Author hasn't died after all.

Vignette: The Small Corner

"In addition to the other information products and services described in this proposal, the contractor offers a special project."

The special project was a canned searchable database on a floppy disk. I thought it was a great idea for 1987—feasible yet challenging, familiar but expansive. We could parlay it into new products every year, maybe make a little money. And it had the sheen of new technology—something the feds were looking for in every proposal that year.

Unfortunately, no one else on the team writing this 200-page grant found the special project idea compelling enough to work it up with me: they were busy with their own sections. If I could fit it into my list of assignments, great; make it three to four pages, add a budget, then back to the big stuff.

So this was our "collaborative" model: you in your small corner, and I in mine. It was efficient and discrete. There was no duplication of effort, no ("wasteful") recursions by

[C]ollaboration is an inherent condition for all writing activity. Thralls 64)

me into text already composed by you. In a strange way, the process honored the expertise of each writer. Oh, we exchanged drafts—late drafts—for editing. But for the most part we wrote alone. We were focussed and productive and aware of the deadline. We watched the stack of pages grow.

The Sound of One Hand Writing

Smith's treatment of "collective intelligence" is interesting here. He argues that members of a collaborative group operate as

one intelligent agent, rather than as individual agents merely performing separate tasks in accord with some larger plan. That is, *collaborators* achieve a critical level of congruence in understanding, in purpose, and in other intellectual dimensions of a project.

Cooperators organize themselves differently: clear structure, division of roles, division of knowledge, efficiency—"hierarchy" in its neutral or positive dimension. Smith suggests that we see "collaboration as a kind of intelligent organism" directed by its collective intelligence. This doesn't imply a transcending, integrated consciousness; there's no metacognition

Ironically, the more prescriptive definition here is the one emerging for collaboration.

here, and there needn't be the sentiment for "community" that Miller wards off. But there's a working shared knowledge and a dynamic process of contribution, adjustment and synthesis among members—and between members and the group. The collaborative organism as a functional collage of connected awarenesses: I think of a string quartet, for example.

You always think of a string quartet, but the musical group as exemplar makes some sense. Same piece, multiple voices, integrated roles, one name.

(But different, too: quartets will play often, while the writing group may deliver only one performance, yes?)

There being no pure forms, how about a group-work continuum? At one end, let's posit the hypothetical *individual* working alone after the autonomous model.

(Nearby are the ghostwriter and the plagiarist—working "alone" but co-opting another identity.)

Cooperators

Individual

Collaborators

There along the middle is a range of *cooperation*: individuals more or less isolate, but working in concert with others on a joint project. As the degree of integration increases, we move into the range of *collaborative* models. Here, the individuals contribute more and more to a group solidarity, constituted in the dynamic that Smith calls "collective intelligence." True (or perhaps "truest") collaboration happens, per Smith, when the product is so well integrated that it seems to be the creation of one mind.

(How important is the "seems" of that last sentence?)

In his role as CCC editor—another collaborator?—Joseph Harris asks us a good question here: “What is it that people really value about collaboration: the process? or the sort of discourse it produces?”

(Well, but what sort of discourse is that?)

McNenny and Roen claim the process is valuable in part for the enjoyment it provides. Certainly, that’s part of it—the pleasure that comes from making something together, from “writing with” (to use Reagan et al’s phrase). I think in some cases, too, the discourse profits noticeably from collaboration: neither of us could have written this kind of text (whatever it is) alone. Not at first, though now we could. So is the motive process? textuality? or another possibility: identity.

But that’s for later. First, let’s do community.

Collaboration and Community

In spite of sensible dissent by Joseph Harris (cf. “The Idea of Community...”) and others, many scholars in composition studies still seem to prefer a certain vagueness in the idea of community. It’s as if the word has become magic: a talisman against the idea of conflict in the discipline. (As if conflict of ideas is somehow dangerous to the idea of community.) One would guess that this comfortable magic is also behind the interest in collaboration. And while it has brought some luck to the study of composition, it may also have kept the field from seeing value in reasonable non-collaborative models of writing.

If shared conventions alone make a community, then a prison ought to be one. (Spellmeyer 83)

Absolutely. It privileges what Muriel Harris has called the multi-draft writer and the writer who shares and shares and shares. That works, of course, if you are a multi-sharing multi-drafting writer. It has to make you wonder what it is exactly that we are replicating. Or perhaps we don’t reflect on what we are replicating at all, and that’s part of the problem.

Susan Miller relates her discouragement that her students were willing to function as a committee, but not as a community. Miller isn’t insulting her students with the usual connotations of committee work: turgid inefficiency and lowest-common-denominator product. I think she has in mind that special detachment that committee

members feel toward each other and toward the project of the group. She means simply that a committee is not a community.

I get the sense sometimes that in the very idea of community, we see an offer of salvation: a chance for all of us to be the same, to work the same and feel the same—ironically, at the same time that we (predictably) salute difference. A community of differences running amuck exactly the same.

But maybe a committee (for one example) is not such a bad model, if we can discard stereotypes for the moment. In fact, it may be an especially appropriate model for group writing in the classroom. There are many similarities: the work is assigned, a deadline set from outside, an inescapable arbitrariness pervades. Committees have an emotional detachment about them

because they belong to the world of work. Developing (or discovering) community is not on the agenda; it might well be a distraction.

Yes, but. Students can become invested in their work so that community develops from committee, and in a class that is student-centered, that would be one of the goals, assuming of course that writing you care about is likely to be better writing, as Britton argues.

Fair enough, but I don't think I agree 1) that committee members don't or can't "care" about the writing they do—they just care differently; or 2) that writing you "care" about will necessarily be better—i.e., more effective and appropriate. Britton isn't to blame, but composition teachers are inundated every year with student writing that is truly impassioned and truly bad. I think the *kind* of caring is at issue: students don't always care about writing the way the teacher wants them to care, and when they do, it isn't always better for their writing.

Sotto voce: can we step aside and clarify one thing? Though a critique like Schilb's of uncritical collaboration within potentially unethical structures is utterly persuasive, I don't take his paper as a call for *uncritical resistance* to all hierarchies or to hierarchy in the abstract. Is it clear enough that in certain circumstances, a hierarchical mode of group writing might quite ethically achieve the goals of the group better than a dialogic mode would?

More to the point perhaps: I don't know that developing community is ever on a writer's agenda in the way you suggest. Seems to me that finding, discovering community is something that comes out of work toward a common goal. It's a benefit rather than a purpose. A function of.

But I think Miller (and Harris before her) is right that we need to beware of how sentimental

“community” has become. Many writing teachers find that their paid occupation is also their preoccupation, and I’d guess that as a result they have an affective investment in writing, in addition to their intellectual one. As Miller did at first, they find it disappointing when students approach writing as merely a job—committee work. But this actually seems quite sensible from the students’ point of view: writing-for-the-teacher *is* your profession when you’re a student, and working as a committee is an effective—even a natural—approach in a professional setting. In their enthusiasm for writing, teachers may forget that the affect profile is different for students. And in their commitment to dialogic modes, they may forget that hierarchical modes, as Ede and Lunsford (perhaps ruefully) discovered, can be perceived within the group as more effective.

Yes, it’s almost as if the ideology we associate with hierarchy—we who are liberals, of course—prevents us from seeing how this works for others, that in some cases a hierarchical, committee-based way of proceeding could be the best choice for those

There’s more delusion, too. Though many teachers talk that dialogic talk, in the typical classroom, writing group roles are carefully defined, tasks are parceled out, and the deadline is paramount. In other words, we usually assign for students what Smith would call cooperative—not collaborative—work, in what Ede and Lunsford would call a hierarchical—not a dialogic—mode.

writers at that time. Also, yes, a big difference between “common” and “commune.”

*And even in professionals’ own work, we talk a much better game of collaboration than we ourselves enact. All too often, collaboration for us is committee-work too: assigning different parts of a task to different writers, so that what we do is write smaller, discrete/r papers that we call—collectively—*text*,*

—as is common on the web—

instead of writing a text that is composed, multi-vocally or otherwise. This might be team-writing, but where is the sense of collective?

It’s in our superstition: we “see” collaboration everywhere, along with community. The trouble is that the effect of an all-inclusive definition of collaboration has been to trivialize collaboration. Not that constructivism doesn’t imply the extended context. It does. Not, on the other hand, that a group of writers shouldn’t work in the manner most comfortable for them—they should—whether dialogically or hierarchically, committee or not, whether they pursue a collective

intelligence or not. I just mean it has to be OK to say that these are not *all* “collaborative” modes of writing.

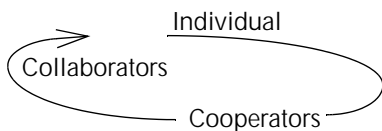
Because if our theory must call all writing collaborative, then “collaboration” becomes moot and useless as a theoretical construct.

And then this emperor has no clothes.

The Plural I: Collaboration and Identity

It's interesting to rethink the continuum we mentioned earlier, to think of it as a circular one or a spiral, instead of a linear one. Imagine the lone author at a given

point on a circle. Move in one direction along the perimeter through increasingly cooperative projects, on into collaborative ones, until you reach the fulfillment of Smith's “expectation of a singular purpose and a seamless integration of the parts, as if the conceptual object were produced by a single good mind.” And where are you? Back to the individual.



Collaborative writing is like having another self. (Pennisi and Lawler 226)

Well, not “the” individual, but a collective one, an Ede/Lunsford, an our/self.

In the collectivity of this collaborated self, you see enacted a number of the sacred truths of postmodern thinking. You see the Lyotardian network in which we are all nodes, you see a denial of the originary, and so on.

A denial of the originary, or a re-formulation? Even in its collectivity, it's still a singular. The autonomous self seen through a kaleidoscope—fragmented, but composed.

Another view of collaboration seems oriented to foregrounding difference: this is the tack taken by many—for example, John Trimbur in “Consensus and Dissent”; Joseph Harris in “The Idea of Community...”; Gregory Clark in “Rescuing the Discourse of Community”; Ede and Lunsford; and some of the chapters in the Reagan/Fox/Bleich collection. Consensus—even—is seen in the latter collection as a relationship among differences, and David Bleich asserts that what we are after is “a new combination of voices that only a collaborative context can help construct.” He also theorizes that, in the classroom, successful collaboration is successful in part because it is “extended”: “The extended collaboration becomes the most authoritative context for writing” (194).

But, of course: if we aren't different, then we don't need to collaborate.

Susan Miller connects collaboration and identity politics through the metaphor of urban discourse:

This discursive model would celebrate four qualities of urban societies: it would allow for differentiation without exclusion; appreciate variety; encourage erotic attraction to novel, strange, and surprising encounters; and—as Bender and Young argue (if differently)—value publicity in “public spaces . . . where people stand and sit together, interact and mingle, or simply witness one another, without becoming unified in a community of ‘shared final ends.’” (299)

The identity issue is addressed by others as well, in terms starkly political and primarily professional. Judith Entes does an entire piece on the untenured professor whose institution’s construct of authorship is decidedly singular—i.e., no credit awarded for collaborated publications; Marilyn Cooper and her colleagues argue that collaborative groups are more powerful in chorus than in solo, no matter how collective; Deborah Holdstein’s focus is the disjunction between a collaborative classroom and individualized assessment.

In the Preface to Singular Texts/Plural Authors, Ede and Lunsford discuss the possibility of collective identity for themselves—e.g., “Annalisa Edesford” (x)—but ultimately they choose to alternate first attribution from one publication to the next. This is a practice they continue to exercise during their “extended collaboration,” as do many other well-known writing partners. Amusingly, they quote physicist Ralph E. Weston, who, in his own “Modest Proposal” calls for collaborating scientists to “‘accept authorship designated by a group name,’ such as the Harvard-MIT Yankees” (100). He signs the article with several versions of his own name, from Ralph Emerson Weston to R. E. Weston.

Order of authorship is alphabetical. (Butler and Winne 245)

Collaborating authors often list their names in alphabetical order on publications in order to downplay differences of knowledge, power, or academic rank. . . . Such strategies, however, often serve only to make authors appear equal on the page when they actually disguise important social and cultural differences. (Kirsch 195)

We have even considered publishing major projects. . . . under coined neologisms, such as Annalisa Edesford. . . . Our ultimate recognition of the problems this practice might cause. . . . forced us to abandon this plan. (Ede and Lunsford x)

Entes quotes Harvey Weiner in suggesting that "A successful collaboration is like a marriage. You don't want to end up divorced." (58) And McNenny and Roen make the same point: that teams should take seriously their individual responsibilities as co-authors (303).

In short, ironically, in spite of all, the We in collaborative scholarship is under erasure. Identity is very much individualistic, the individuals and their concerns linked rather than "collected."

And not so surprisingly, those concerns appear in places that only *seem* marginal: for order of attribution, you first or moi?

Even authors who call themselves postmodern—even when they collaborate, even as they deconstruct the idea of "author"—typically write in a single good voice, typically "sign" their "own" work—ironically trapped in the single self in spite of themselves.

How does one get around this? How about the writer/s of this paper? A collaborated self wants to say with the villagers to the census taker "we are one." Yet—for example, by acting out the intersection of voices in the format of this paper—that self also says "my name is Legion."

Perhaps it's like a fragmented self, a variation of Charles Moran's "extended self," with alter-egos endlessly alternating.

But again, Smith would say there's no mysticism here. The process of developing group knowledge necessarily influences the thinking of each individual in the group. So a creative tension grows between the individual and the group—or between the conceptual structures held in common and those held individually.

I'd like to meet a scholar of such fame; to Microcosm, then, I'd change his name!

(Mephistopheles)

When the individual articulates an idiosyncratic association between shared and private knowledge, it becomes new material for the collective process, and the cycle of development repeats.

The writer...continually expands herself...to accommodate the new "selves" she develops in relation to the collaborative experience. (Pennisi and Lawler 228)

James Porter gets at the same phenomenon, but through the lens of text. Writing, he says, is an attempt to exercise the will, to identify the self within the constraints of some discourse community. We are constrained insofar as

we must inevitably borrow the traces, codes, and signs that we inherit and that our discourse community imposes. We are free insofar as we do what we can to encounter and learn new codes, to intertwine new codes in new ways, and to expand our semiotic potential—our goal being to effect change and establish our identities within the discourse communities we choose to enter.

And he goes on:

The most mundane manifestation of intertextuality is explicit citation, but intertextuality animates all discourse and goes beyond mere citation. For the intertextual critics, Intertext is Text—a great seamless textual fabric. And, as they like to intone solemnly, no text escapes intertext. (Porter 41)

Are the processes of co-authorship similarly seamless? As processes? As texts? As claimed? How might we infuse them into text without creating incoherence?

Collaboration qua Textuality

So far in this discussion, no one is looking at how such different voices—the ones nominally so important in collaboration of whatever variety—might be represented textually. The assumption seems pretty much conventional and universal: that writing will continue to be writing; the old genres will suffice to contain it. That's part of the problem: the old genres contain it. In other words, it seems pretty obvious that if we want a new method, or even if what we are talking about is an old method newly understood and valued, and/or if we want traces and resonances of these processes—this collective intelligence?—represented textually, we might have to invent new genres that wouldn't contain it, might have to refigure old genres so that they couldn't contain it.

Walter Benjamin describes the impact of montage as when “the superimposed element disrupts the context in which it is inserted.” This is more than a feature of collaborative writing; it is the theme.

(Pennisi and Lawler 230)

Where we may depart from Smith is in the importance of seeming to be the product of “a single good mind.” Or perhaps not; I can't tell what Smith might make of multivocality. Clearly, a single mind (good or not) *could* write this way.

Representing the multivocal processes of collaboration can provide a source of coherence for text, since they carry the traces of the interaction between writers,

their very working out of the issues before our eyes. When it works—when the representation of the processes is sufficient and persuasive—then marks of coherence that we associate with expository text—the mediated ties of Halliday and Hasan, for instance—can be superfluous. (And as Haswell has noted, even in expository writing, the marks of cohesion vary considerably; there is what he calls a principle of cohesive elegance or efficiency that changes according to genre, to rhetorical situation, to sophistication of the writer. So cohesion isn't monologic even in expository writing.)

The disconnects that characterize any partnership provide a source of coherence when they are designed and expressed to do this. Thus, the reader uses the patterning and rhythm to recreate the collaborative processes that created the text and vicariously participates in the processes (of) composing the text.

So the source of coherence here is in the collaboration itself, *within* the interaction among collaborators rather than in addition to it?

The disconnects, the disruptive, which aren't random at all, permit a different kind of aesthetic that is itself rooted in difference, an appreciation and articulation of difference. Once this is a value epistemologically, and once the culture recognizes it as a value, and once you've got the media that underscore such difference, you have the opportunity to develop an aesthetic of difference. Hence, this text.

And as Gregory Ulmer and others have suggested, one (post)modern space where such an aesthetic of difference seems welcome is on the net, the web, the electronic landscape—a territory that so far defies mapping.

If this construction of the current scene makes sense, then our aesthetics of chaos/difference is not in spite of, but as a consequence of.

Once we've allowed ourselves the luxury of many voices in our writing, we just might find it tolerable to be involved in a group collaboration via computers and find it easier to accept the many voices in a joint collaborative text, even if these voices seem conflicting, confusing, or chaotic at first. (Batson)

The collaborative text: a plural commons.

Concluding by Critique

So what do we have here? I mean, apart from the sound and fury of these typefaces expressing multiple voices and putting the reader to all kinds of trouble, what's the point? Why have we asked readers to parse voices, to pur-

sue reading via deliberate interruptions, to accept that this extra effort was worthwhile? Just to call into question the conventional wisdom about collaboration? Couldn't we have made the point—and made it more fluently, more succinctly, and even more pleasantly—by working more conventionally?

Certainly. We could have written a seamless monologue honoring the role of discontinuities in collaborative work. We could have delivered a respectable monologic essay celebrating the virtues of multiplicity. It's done all the time, right?

If multivocal writing becomes the “new force” that Gesa Kirsch predicts, it will be interesting to see what readers make of it. To see if they are annoyed at the reading work involved, or to see if they are pulled into the text—perhaps as voyeur (as the viewer of My Dinner with Andre is), or as reader-chorus, (Did I mention that I fell asleep during My Dinner with Andre?) or as participant. Or to see if they like the multivocal text in spite of themselves, or if they find reading it difficult precisely because this text doesn't quite fit their genre expectations.

The role of the reader here is both an advantage and a risk. I mean, to expose the multiple gears and pulleys does in fact represent the collaborative process, and it should work in part to remind readers of their own contribution to meanings made. Multiplicity, transaction, community, intertextuality mean nothing if they stop at the end of the page.

Regardless: the medium will influence how readers respond to this kind of text. To that extent, a multivocal text succeeds in making its aesthetic central to its argument.

On the other hand, the work then becomes one of those post-Duchamp hands-on “sculptures” that invite the viewer to rearrange them. Artist, tourist, and grubby child alike can turn this knob, open this hatch, re-sort the contents, disassemble and reassemble the pieces.

Are we sure this is a good idea?

This method of collaboration—which we are arguing is one in a panoply of others—is best represented by a text's replicating it. This text speaks to its author/s' collective intelligence, attempts to give it some definition by reference to the claims made here and the ways those claims were developed. The text, we might say, embodies collective intelligence and some of the ways, at least, that such intelligence is created.

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