

## Collaboration: An Editorial Foreword

As Jeffrey Di Leo shows in his chapter on ‘Self-Publishing’ in this volume, the rise of digital technology has had a profoundly levelling effect on the obstacles a person must overcome on the road to world authorship. Indeed, in the age of social media, it can easily feel as if every person is an author, even if the longest masterpiece they ever compose weighs in at 280 characters and the only pretence to poetry consists of the careful arrangement of hash tags.

Even as they enable and celebrate authorial autonomy, however, digital technologies also undercut it. Who, precisely, is the author of the memes in which we increasingly communicate online? And are the conspiracy theories that emanate from platforms such as 8chan or Reddit the products of individual creators, or a collaborative product?

These important questions put pressure not only on scholars of new media or of the sociology of literature, but also on aesthetic philosophers. In this chapter, Sondra Bacharach presents an overview of recent philosophical approaches to the question of collaborative authorship and advocates for an approach to the phenomenon that would rely less on authorial *intentions* than it would on *commitments*. The distinction has obvious implications for theories of authorship more generally: to call yourself an author, so it suggests, you have to be willing also to take ethical and intellectual ownership of what you have written.

This conclusion, in turn, provides further support to the central thesis underlying this volume—namely, that the study of world literature is incomplete without due regard for the authorial dimension. In an age in which ever-increasing amounts of the discourse that surrounds us seem to emanate from an internet hive mind, to take responsibility for a piece of writing—to sign off on it with the name of an author—is already a profoundly meaningful act.

See also: → Beginnings → Media → Self-Publishing

# COLLABORATION

## Rethinking Origins and Ownership

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Debates around authorship have, until recently, centred exclusively on the role of the author in interpreting, understanding, and appreciating the literary work. At stake has been determining what role, if any, is played by intentions in our interpretations of the literary work. Given the complicated relationship between work and author, this should not come as such a surprise. Whether we take the author to be a stereotypically (mis)understood romantic, a solitary genius toiling away to express his emotions through his works, someone who should be banished from literary interpretation, or just someone whose author function simply ceases to matter—all these approaches highlight the centrality of the authorial position in the interpretative debate.<sup>1</sup>

All these shifting attitudes, however, presuppose that the author is an *individual*. But, the days of simply constructing a theory of authorship around a single individual, writing independently, authoring in solitary isolation, are long gone. New media technologies make new forms of authorship possible and invite alternative methods of conceptualizing an author—from zines, to the Web 2.0, to comics. We need a new theory better to capture the long-running problem of authorship in literature.

But, with what should the solitary individual author (dead or alive) be replaced, given these challenges? This chapter will explore conceptions of authorship that extend beyond individual contributions, into the realm of collaborative authorship.

<sup>1</sup> K. E. Gover, 'Myth of the Author as Solitary Genius', in S. Bacharach, S. B. Fjaerstad, and J. N. Booth (eds), *Collaborative Art in the Twenty First Century* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 65–76; Alexander Nehamas, 'What an Author Is', *Journal of Philosophy*, 83/11 (1986), 685–91; Peter Lamarque, 'The Death of the Author: An Analytical Autopsy', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 30/4: 319–31; Gary Iseminger (ed.), *Intention and Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992); Berys Gaut and Paisley Livingston, *The Creation of Art: New Essays in Philosophical Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Collaboration in literature, as in other artistic domains, takes a number of different forms. Underlying all of them, however, is the intuition that artists do not act alone, in an aesthetic vacuum, and independently of their relationship to those around them. One central task of an account of collaborative authorship, then, is to articulate the ways in which multiple agents are involved in the production of the literary work. These ways can be understood as operating on a continuum that traces the degree to which multiple agents are working *together* in some robust and meaningful sense of that term.

At one end of the spectrum are authors whose relations to other agents are weakly collaborative, with a limited kind of dispersed responsibility—for example, cases where authors will have worked separately, independently, and in isolation from one another, making their own individual contributions that ultimately are combined into a single work. In such cases, each author contributes a small piece to the collection, and his responsibility is limited to that selection alone. The divisions of artistic labour are clear, with each individual taking responsibility for his respective contribution to the final product. Authors may never know about or read each other's respective contributions, and the only sense of collaborative effort generated is a minimal one limited to different agents agreeing to contribute something to the larger work. A collection of short stories is an example of this kind of weak collaboration.

At the other end of the spectrum, however, are more robust kinds of collaborations, where members of a group work on every aspect of the work together (either at different times or at the same time). In these highly collaborative cases, there may be no clear division of artistic labour, individual authors may not be able to identify their own independent contributions, and responsibility is often attributed to the group as a whole, rather than to the individuals who comprise the group. Many literary collaborations function in this way, particularly in cases of ghostwriting, posthumous authorship, graphic novels, and children's literature, to name just a few. In these cases, individuals work together in varying degrees, with the goal of collaboratively creating a literary work. Co-authored works represent the most extreme form of this kind of collaboration. Here, two or more agents, each with his own authorial voice and agency, jointly produce a literary work. This chapter will analyse the myriad ways that individuals can contribute to a multiply-authored work, ways that challenge us to redefine the very conceptual tools and resources with which to understand authorship itself.

## Multiple Authorship

Consider first cases of multiple agency, such as the aforementioned short-story anthology, where multiple authors create a work, without anyone engaging in any

robust kind of collaboration. We might imagine such a collection proceeding such that each author agrees to write a single contribution to the book, without any individual author being necessarily aware of the features of the book as a whole. In such a situation, a few central characteristics of multiple authorship are underscored. First, individual contributors are unaware of, and have no authorial role in, the expressive content of the book as a whole, or any other aspects of its content. Second, each individual author's contribution may, but need not, be responsive to what others have written, and the author of one contribution need not feel obligated to endorse claims or ideas expressed by the authors of the other contributions. Finally, no contributor agrees to write the book in its entirety—nobody agrees to write this book *together* in any meaningful sense. The editor alone is responsible for the book as a whole. If the book as a whole is an incredible success, no contributor could claim responsibility (except to the extent that her contribution itself was successful).

Another example of multiple authorship lacking any collaborative agency involves cases where multiple agents contribute a small part (a word, a sentence, or sometimes even a chapter) to a single work, without any knowledge of the others' contributions. For example, the surrealist-inspired game *cadavre exquis* (as well as its modern-day variation *Mad Libs*) requires each individual to contribute to a larger work of writing, having seen only the contribution of the immediately preceding writer. Similarly, in round-robin stories, each individual author contributes one part of the work, without knowing what anyone else has contributed. These works are multiply authored sequentially over time, but contributors are not necessarily thereby working together in any meaningful sense, because they are not aware of the others' involvement and do not share any collaborative intentions or goals.

Opportunities for multiple authorship have expanded only with the arrival of the internet. There is little, if any, difference between the multiple authorship involved in *cadavre exquis* or round-robin story-writing, and their more contemporary online incarnations appearing on the web: random individuals can now play *Mad Libs* online together, generate a 'Choose-Your-Own-Adventure' story, and contribute to other audience-driven stories. At first glance, one might be tempted to think the only difference is one of medium, a shift from pens and paper to a computer. But, at least in principle, a difference in medium should not result in a new conception of authorship.

However, electronically mediated multiple authorship introduces new complications to making sense of multiple authorship. Consider the example of *A Million Penguins*, which is the first fictional work that has been collectively written, edited, and read by millions, thanks to wiki-style software.<sup>2</sup> This work had over 1,500 individuals contributing to the writing, over 11,000 edits, and 750,000 people visiting

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2007/mar/12/livingwithamillionpenguins> (accessed 6 March 2020).

the site, until it closed in 2007. They are surely all not only contributors, but also *bona fide* authors (much like Wikipedia sites, which may be the most famous example of electronically mediated, multiply authored works). First, thanks to the resources of the internet, electronically mediated, multiply-authored literary works like *A Million Penguins* (unlike collected short stories and round robins) can be authored *simultaneously* by multiple people, even when those individuals lack awareness of one another or their respective contributions. This is impossible in round robins or *cadavre exquis* stories, where contributions must occur sequentially, one after the other, diachronically. Second, and as a consequence, the entire content of an electronically mediated literary work can be revised and altered by multiple people at the same time synchronically. Multiple authors, then, may simultaneously contribute to a work in its entirety, without necessarily working together in any meaningful sense.

One might object that crowd-sourced writing, while multiply authored, is missing any sense of coherent agency or coherent intentions that guide and direct the work's content and aesthetic features. These works may well be multiply authored, but they lack any kind of aesthetic ownership of the kind we desire implicitly in reading literary works. Genuine co-authorship and full-fledged collaboration, in contrast to mere multiple authorship, involve something more than mere individual authors contributing to a single work—though *what* precisely needs to be added differs from one theorist to another. Before examining this robust conception of co-authorship and full-fledged collaboration, let us turn to another weaker form of collaborative authorship, which is rather common in the literary world—namely, authoring on behalf of someone else.

## Secondary Agency

Sometimes, an individual contributes to the work of another, *on behalf of that other person*, without trying to collaborate with that person. When one person (the secondary agent) acts on behalf of another person (the primary agent), the former person gives up his own voice and agency, and adopts the voice and agency of the latter. Acting on behalf of someone else is often referred to as engaging in secondary agency. Many writers act on behalf of other authors, contributing to their work, in their voice, from their point of view. In these cases, multiple authors contribute to the entirety of the work, but only the primary author is credited with authoring the work, since the secondary author is merely acting on behalf of the primary author.

Secondary agency can arise both in cases where the primary agent is alive, and in cases when she is dead. Secondary agency can take the form of authoring completely new works on behalf of the primary author. After V. C. Andrews's death, for example, her estate hired ghostwriter Andrew Niederman to continue writing on

her behalf. In other cases, secondary agency takes the form of merely completing a work that the primary agent has started, but never finished, usually owing to an untimely death. Frank Herbert's works, for example, were completed by his son Brian, based on the notes he left behind for the *Dune* series. In such cases, secondary agents try to fulfil the interests of the primary author as best they can and to complete the work as the primary author would have wanted it. Even when the secondary agent contributes significant ideas, aesthetically relevant features, and new ways of presenting the primary author's work, they do so only on the primary author's behalf.<sup>3</sup>

This section considers two of the most common forms of secondary agency in authorship: first the case of ghostwriters, and second the case of editors. Ghostwriters write on behalf of other people, and these other people, not the ghostwriters, are credited with authorship. An author may ghostwrite on behalf of someone else while the person is still alive. Ghostwriters write on behalf of celebrities while they are alive—consider politicians such as Sarah Palin, Barack Obama; musicians such as Smokey Robinson and Aretha Franklin; sportspersons such as Andre Agassi and Lance Armstrong, as well as celebrities such as Hilary Duff and Mylie Cyrus, among others. In most cases, writers engaging in secondary agency, writing on behalf of someone else, do not want, or are not meant, to be accorded authorial status; when it does happen, it is often a surprise, and the media enjoy 'outing' a ghostwriter.

All posthumous agency of this kind is a subset of the larger class of secondary agency—namely, secondary agency occurring after the primary agent's death. Notice that posthumous agency should not be regarded as a form of collaboration, since the deceased authors have no true input in the collaboration in which they are ostensible partners.

Editors represent another common case of secondary agency; they raise interesting questions about collaborative authorship, because it is not always clear what it means to act on behalf of the authors whose work they are responsible for editing. The role that editors play is often quite ambiguous, in ways that challenge what it means for a secondary agent to act on behalf of a primary agent. Secondary agency was defined earlier as occurring when (1) the secondary agent fulfils the interests of the primary author as best the secondary agent can, and (2) the secondary agent gives up her own voice and agency, adopting the voice and agency of the other person to her best ability. This may sound reasonable and straightforward in principle, but it becomes quite messy in practice—to the extent that an author has many different, and sometimes conflicting and competing interests, a secondary agent may fulfil them in ways that lead to contradictions, or she may choose to fulfil some interests at the expense of others. And indeed, where an editor has commissioned the work in the first place, with a distinct vision for a work's form, structure, and

<sup>3</sup> Sondra Bacharach and Deborah Tollefsen, 'You Complete Me: Posthumous Authorship and Secondary Agency', *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 49/4 (2015), 71–86.

content, one might even be tempted to treat the editor as a primary agent—perhaps even a co-author alongside the individual creating the work.

One notorious case of secondary authorship concerns Max Brod's posthumous editorial work for Franz Kafka. Kafka left many unfinished works, including *The Trial* and *The Castle* (which ends mid-sentence!) after his death. Brod, Kafka's literary executor, edited both works, added chapters, completed sentences, and otherwise altered the works substantially before publishing them under Kafka's name. There is certainly a sense in which these editorial changes were made on Kafka's behalf and were in Kafka's best interests: Kafka, after all, would not have received the critical acclaim he has were these works not posthumously published. On the other hand, however, the posthumous publication of these works goes directly against a competing interest that Kafka held at his time of death—namely, he said he wanted all of his work burned. Acting as a secondary agent and fulfilling Kafka's wishes and interests, given the situation, would have compelled Brod in very different directions, depending on which of the wishes and interests Brod decided to fulfil, and which to ignore. There are as many ways for a secondary agent to act on behalf of a primary agent as there are interests to fulfil. When the primary agents' interests conflict, so too will the secondary agent's realization of those interests.<sup>4</sup>

So far, this chapter has rehearsed two ways in which different agents can contribute to a literary work—multiple authorship and secondary agency. When multiple authors each contribute to a work separately, without any shared intentions, each contributor is recognized as an author. When an author contributes on behalf of someone else, we usually do not attribute authorial status to the former (the secondary agent), but only to the latter (the primary agent). In the case of genuine co-authorship, in contrast, the reader is faced with the challenge of interpretation without any efforts made to facilitate such an experience. In this final section, we consider a variety of theories developed to account for collaborative authorship.

### Genuine Co-Authorship: Some Theories of Collaborative Authorship

In genuine co-authorship, two or more agents work collaboratively, each with their own authorial voice and agency, to create a collaboratively produced literary work. Authors work collaboratively in lots of different ways, depending on the nature of the topic at hand, the methods for writing adopted, and their relationship to one another.

<sup>4</sup> The complicated relationship of an editor to his author is highlighted in many literary cases: Gordon Lish's editorial relationship to author Raymond Carver; Max Perkin's relationship to authors Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Wolfe; Ezra Pound's relationship to T. S. Eliot; Thomas Higginson's relationship to Emily Dickinson.



Three theories of multiple authorship have emerged in the last two decades to unpack what is involved in collaborations among co-authors in a variety of artistic media, including literature. They all rely in various ways and to differing degrees on the ways that intentions connect and are shared amongst co-authors.

Paisley Livingston was the first to carve out this area, adapting contemporary theories of collective action and collective intentionality to make sense of how authors work together as co-authors.<sup>5</sup> His view draws on Michael Bratman's work on shared intentions, arguing that co-authors possess shared intentions to contribute to a single work for which they take credit, where shared intentions are understood as states of affairs that include both the individual intentions ('I intend that we  $x$ ') as well as the interrelations among those individual intentions.<sup>6</sup> Collaborating authors contribute to the shared goal in ways that enable them to coordinate their contributions and not undermine the contributions of other participants. This view has the most plausibility and applicability in smaller groups where individual members communicate regularly and closely.

On Livingston's formal analysis,

Joint authorship requires that two or more contributors  $A_1$  [...]  $A_n$  intentionally make an utterance<sup>7</sup> or work for which they take shared responsibility or credit, and they do so by acting on the following intentions:

- (1)  $A_1$  intends to contribute to the making of utterance  $U$  as an expression of  $A_1$ 's attitudes.
- (2)  $A_1$  intends to realize (1) by acting on, and in accordance with sub-plans that mesh with those of the other contributors, including sub-plans relative to the manner in which the utterance is to be produced and to the utterance's expressive contents.
- (3)  $A_2$  intends to contribute to the making of utterance  $U$  as an expression of  $A_2$ 's attitudes.
- (4)  $A_2$  intends to realize (3) by acting on, and in accordance with, sub-plans that mesh with those of the other contributors, including sub-plans relative to the manner in which the utterance is to be produced and to the utterance's expressive contents (and so on for other contributors).
- (5)  $A_1$  [...]  $A_n$  mutually believe that they have the attitudes 1–4.<sup>8</sup>

Livingston's theory is best suited for collaborations where agents have knowledge of aesthetic properties of the work and where there is no official authority or formal institutional structures.

Recently, Darren Hudson Hick has rejected Livingston's idea of coordinated intentions as a way of distinguishing multiple authorship from co-authorship, arguing that, in genuine co-authorship, an author takes responsibility not just for a

<sup>5</sup> Paisley Livingston, *Art and Intention* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> Michael Bratman, 'Shared Intentions', *Ethics*, 104 (1993), 97–113.

<sup>7</sup> Livingston follows Grice here in defining an utterance as an intentional meaningful expression. See Paul Grice, 'Utterer's Meaning and Intentions', *Philosophical Review*, 78 (1969), 147–77.

<sup>8</sup> Livingston, *Art and Intention*, 83–4.



particular section, but for the work as a whole.<sup>9</sup> He develops a different model of co-authorship, privileging the notion of responsibility over the idea of shared intentions. On Hick's view, if an author takes responsibility only for some discrete, identifiable unit, but not for the whole work, then the work is multiply authored. If, however, the authors take responsibility for the whole work, then Hick claims the work is co-authored. Hick relies on appeals to copyright law to defend his appeal to responsibility.<sup>10</sup>

Bacharach and Tollefsen accept that, although responsibility for the work as a whole might seem to be an interesting and promising way of articulating a robust notion of co-authorship, ultimately, responsibility—as defined by copyright law—is cashed out in terms of joint commitments.<sup>11</sup> A joint work, as defined by copyright law, involves working together in a significant way, intending to produce a work as a unitary whole. What makes the work a unified whole, and not just a collection of separate works, hinges crucially on the *creation of a joint commitment*. Authors who make joint commitments intend their contributions to merge into inseparable or interdependent parts of a unitary whole. As a result, ironically, Hick's appeal to copyright to support the idea of responsibility, unwittingly ends up supporting Bacharach and Tollefsen's account of co-authorship, not Hick's.

Bacharach and Tollefsen's account of co-authorship is grounded not in the connections among individual intentions, but rather in joint commitments that involve a special sort of interaction.<sup>12</sup> On their view, all full-fledged collaborations share in common a joint commitment to create a literary work together. When authors accept the joint commitment to make a work together, they move beyond multiple authorship and secondary agency to a new kind of collaborative relationship: co-authorship. Co-authorship involves a particular kind of commitment to one another, a mutual responsiveness to one another. Genuine cases of co-authorship involve a full-fledged sharing of ideas, which allows for a give and take and a mutual interdependency that is absent from the other forms of authorship considered so far. Unlike these other cases, actual co-authorship is a two-way street—what I contribute as co-author has implications for what my co-author can then contribute. Co-authorship, in other words, requires a joint commitment to work as a single agent to create a work of art.

To appreciate the difference between a multiply-authored work and a co-authored work, let us take an example. Consider the difference between the authors who contribute to a collection of short stories, and three authors who decide to co-author a

<sup>9</sup> Darren Hick, 'Authorship, Co-Authorship, and Multiple Authorship,' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 72/2 (2014), 152.

<sup>10</sup> Hick, 'Authorship, Co-Authorship, and Multiple Authorship', 152.

<sup>11</sup> Sondra Bacharach and Deborah Tollefsen, 'Co-Authorship, Multiple Authorship and Posthumous Authorship: A Reply to Hick,' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 73/3 (2015), 331–4.

<sup>12</sup> Sondra Bacharach and Deborah Tollefsen, 'We Did It!: From Mere Contributors to Coauthors,' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 68/1 (2010), 23–32.

work. When the three authors decide to co-author a work, they make *a joint commitment as a group* to create the work. This joint commitment has several implications: they all have to accept the content of the entire work, even if they do not personally believe the views expressed in a given work at any particular point; they all have to take responsibility as a group for the contents of the *entire book*, even if they do not personally believe the views expressed in the entire book; and they have to decide *as a group* how they want to allocate credit, and that decision may entail that the quantity contributed may not track the quantity of credit. Amount of credit, in other words, need not reflect the degree of authorial contribution in the case of co-authorship. Very generally, co-authors create the work as if they were a single author, where their joint commitment entails individual commitments to act in ways that do not undermine the joint commitment and involves coordinating individual actions.

If the heart of co-authorship centres around individuals making joint commitments to author something as a group, then these joint commitments will vary depending on the type of group. At one end, we might have a basic joint commitment to author a work together (illustrated nicely by the co-authored works by Bacharach and Tollefsen on this very topic). This joint commitment entails other individual commitments to act in ways that do not undermine the joint commitment (for example, not to publish other articles that conflict with the views they articulate together) and involves coordinating individual actions (for example, deciding who is writing or editing which sections, or allowing each to have a turn writing and then editing all sections). The joint commitment will determine what each individual needs to do in order to make it the case, as far as possible, that they create the work as if they were a single author.

All three theories of co-authorship make equally good sense of co-authored literary works, differing more substantially in cases of group authorship in other art forms, such as film, music, or architecture. Genuine co-authorship, however, is much rarer in literature than other artistic domains, such as film, dance, or music, which typically bring together artists across a variety of backgrounds, trainings, and disciplines. As such, it occurs less frequently, but certainly is embedded in areas such as academic co-authorship, or children's literature (between the illustrator and writer), or comics (between colourists, inkers, and letterers). These theories make sense of how these authors are working together in a substantive sense towards a final literary work to which they are all committed.

## Conclusion

I end this survey of collaboration with two related practices that occur frequently alongside collaborations, but that still sit outside that realm—the use of the collective

as a mechanism through which to assemble literary allies, and the *nom de plume* as a way of creating new identities for collectives and their members.

Groups form collectives when individuals want to work together in some loose sense, without thereby committing either to any kind of multiple authorship or to full-bodied collaborations. Like collaborations, collectives also come in a variety of types. Some collectives may be very transient, such as the mid-twentieth-century German alliance, the Gruppe 47, or the early twentieth-century Bloomsbury Group, which involved minimal commitments and lacked any formal organizational structure. Other groups may be highly structured and longer-lasting, such as International PEN, which began in the 1920s with implicit values and now has a highly organized operational structure. They may involve a number of joint commitments, including joint commitments to espouse certain aesthetic goals, or to accept certain aesthetic values or political beliefs, as a body. The group's joint commitments may be very specific, such as endorsing particular social values or political beliefs, or members may simply share a broadly described worldview. Artistic groups that work together over time will, no doubt, form a number of joint commitments to 'do' things as a body in a broad sense, and it is plausible to think that these joint commitments strengthen the bonds within these groups.

Collectives, however, neither entail nor presuppose any kind of co-authorship, as understood by Livingston, Hick, or Bacharach and Tollefsen. Instead, joining a collective expresses a commitment to a certain set of values, attitudes, beliefs, and ideas. We see these shared values, joint commitment, and responsibility to the group through these authors' writings. Such shared value system offers a larger ideological platform from which and within which individuals can realize the values, commitments, and beliefs in their own individual and personal ways. Importantly, however, their commitments to the group do not thereby require any collaborative authorship in any significant sense—authors in the group themselves may never co-author on any of the formal theories of co-authorship sketched above. This is what defines them as collectives rather than collaborations.

Sometimes individuals in collectives adopt the use of a persona, pseudonym, and *nom de plume*. This enables them to hide their personal identity behind a pseudonym, or to construct a new persona with a *nom de plume*. *Noms d -plume*, like collectives, have the effect of bringing together or unifying different authors' views and ideas, without those authors engaging in collaborations.

When a number of different authors are hired to ghostwrite for a series, they may all adopt a single *nom de plume* (sometimes known as a house name), so that a series of books may have the appearance of being authored by the same person, in the same voice. For example, *Nancy Drew* and *Hardy Boys* books were authored by multiple different ghostwriters. But, by writing under the same pseudonym, the series was able to create unity across the series, suggesting that all works under the same pseudonym embodied a particular style, theme, and voice, even when, in practice, they were written by different people.

It is also common practice for collective authors to create a pseudonym to reflect the shared values, intentions, and beliefs that underwrite their co-authored works. While this is more common in other art forms (consider, for example, music bands, dance troupes, and artist collectives), some groups of writers also choose to take on a collective persona for their authorial identity. Collective personas and collective noms de plume need to be accommodated by theories of co-authorship for literary works as well, granting that the group is larger than, or distinct from, the individuals who constitute that group. Examples of this phenomenon include science-fiction writer James S. A. Corey (constituted by Daniel Abraham and Ty Franck), mystery writer Quinn Fawcett (constituted by Chelsea Quinn Yarbro and Bill Fawcett), and Dungeons & Dragons series author T. H. Lain (created to ensure the books, actually written by a variety of different authors, would remain shelved together), to name but a few.

The nom de plume is a way for a group to individuate itself from the mere aggregates of individuals that constitute the group. Such a pseudonym is selected to assert the personality or reflect the character of the group, which is expressed in ways that differ from the personality or character of any individual member of the group.

Currently, theories of multiple authorship and co-authorship do not have room for making sense of the roles that collectives and noms de plume play in literary circles. As the internet brings together unexpected groups mediated through the web, there will be increasing pressure on theories of authorship to expand their accounts to explore issues arising around identity, authorship, and groups. As web-based writing increases, the opportunities for diachronically and synchronically written literary works will also increase. Such phenomena are indications of the direction of future media developments and will need to be explored within the existing theories of collaborative authorship.

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