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Essay 1 Draft 2

The Ownership of Writing

As writing developed from the first few marks on stone to an eloquent and extensive collection of various languages, so did the number of literate individuals capable and willing to write. This has brought us to the present day, where writing is so ubiquitous and connected within its communities that discerning what has been written and what hasn’t becomes a challenge. The notion that most works have already been produced in some form hinders the ability of writers to produce unique pieces. Yet writing is still referred to as an ‘individual’ art, and has entered a stage of turmoil in modern government with respect to copyright laws. In a world empowered by the duplication of information and documents, why does the arrangement of language warrant acknowledgement as an extension of the writer’s identity?

In James Porter’s “Intertextuality and the Discourse Community” an idea is presented that the whole of writing, and in fact all forms of information distribution, have become huge intertextual melting pots: “The traditional notion of the text as the single work of a given author, and even the very notions of author and reader, are regarded as simply convenient fictions for domesticating discourse. The old borders that we used to rope off discourse […] are no longer useful.” (2). For example, fans of the television series “Lost” have assembled a rather massive congregation of hypertext, a close relative to intertext, present in the film series, which range from allusions to “Alice in Wonderland” to detective story “Bad Twin” (Vaughn 1-7; Landow 1). Whether known or not, everything a consumer reads is laced into an intricate web of culture and by studying and witnessing the English language, he or she is indelibly marked with the signature of our society. To write, then, becomes to use and reuse what is have witnessed in experiences. Intertextuality takes away from writing by turning every essay into a collaboration of every artist who has ever written on a topic and influenced another writer who has in turn written something that is read by the essay’s author, and so forth down the recursive path of penmanship. Intertextuality gives generously to writing by providing every author of an essay with the tools and views required to generate and evolve a comprehensive profile for their work. It is important to note that intertextuality is not some blockade to original writing, but is an inherent framework of writing that dispels the notion of individuality and frees every opinion, view, and thesis from its owner.

Individuality is broken. It is broken because we live our lives as individuals. Every aspect of life that is learned is new, and is usually gained from intuition and context. This means that to an individual, the revelation of a new aspect of the world is personally sought after and discovered, and is owned by the mind that has done the work to reveal it. For example, there is a day in many a childhood where the world changes, drastically or gradually, from the solid definition of “This is what the world is.” to “This is what the world has become because of people before you, and it will continue to change.” That concept belongs to the child who realizes it, but is shared by everyone who arrives at the same conclusion. The details of a person’s upbringing are his or her own, and are regarded as purely original. Yet, the general flow of growing up and living within a community is very general, and people can be classified and grouped together based on common experiences. The dichotomy of introvertly owning every aspect of a being and assigning life as individual, and extrovertly realizing that everything is churned together in a global collaboration of language provides a new definition of individuality. All writing is suddenly individual, which is to say the act of writing is individual. Copying text skips the process that allows it to become unique because no internal mechanisms generated it. But even if an author writes a piece that is word for word the same as an existing work, it is still individual. It is still incomprehensively dissimilar because the mind that created it was separate from the mind of the previous work. The internal work of generating an external composition literally binds originality to a work. This means that individuality is only discernable by the author, and is to be a closely guarded ideal of the privilege of literacy.

Several rather tricky obstacles are set before the modern global community. The ability of humans to experience and understand the world around them is stifled by laws which claim they may not own a concept. It is essential for the ability to write without worry of overlapping a billion other texts become available to the literate, and that the process of writing is encouraged rather than scrutinized. Without this adaption, mankind will self-tax its intellect into oblivion. Only understanding this duality of individuality will teach us that to write is to authenticate, and to share in the base of language is to forgo previous misgivings of identity.

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