Peterson Haviland, Carol, and Joan Mullin, eds. *Who Owns This Text? Plagiarism, Authorship, and Disciplinary Cultures.* **Logan: Utah State UP, 2009.**

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As colleges and universities continue to combat plagiarism with clear, campus-wide definitions and swift punishment, scholars interested in rhetoric and composition and in the administration of writing programs and writing centers continue to argue that heavy-handed punishment will not solve the problem and that definitions of plagiarism neither are nor can be perfectly clear or campus-wide. If what counts as "good" writing and as "correct" citation varies from one discipline to another, then what counts as transgression must, at least to some extent, vary as well. *Who Owns This Text? Plagiarism, Authorship, and Disciplinary Cultures*, edited by Carol Peterson Haviland and Joan Mullin, is a response to, among other things, the mistaken belief that we can effectively address plagiarism by clearly articulating the rules of academic writing and citation. The text argues that even if those rules are sensitive to disciplinary differences, they "do not uncover tacit disciplinary conventions, and [they] ignore the dynamic nature of knowledge construction" (4). The god-term of *Who Owns This Text?* and its findings from a six-year interdisciplinary study, is "ownership": the fact that "what may be owned [by faculty members] and how it may be owned varies broadly across fields and studies points to the inadequacy of writing pedagogies that offer simple 'plagiarism rules'" (81). So rather than beginning at the end—the rules—*Who Owns This Text?* begins at the beginning by asking faculty what intellectual properties they take to be "theirs," and to what extent that understanding translates into expectations for, and the teaching of, students' writing. Using a shared set of questions, adapted slightly for different fields, researchers interviewed faculty at nine campuses in five academic contexts: computer science, chemistry and biology, archaeology and

sociology, visual arts, and university administration. (The protocol is included in the appendix.)

"We began by asking our colleagues to describe what elements of scholarship they own, how they come to own them, how they mark that ownership, and why and how ownership matters within their field" (7). As one would expect, the researchers discover significant differences: not only across disciplines, but among faculty within disciplines, between writing pedagogy and the writing practices of faculty, and between what is explicitly stated and mandated and what is tacitly practiced and assumed. In the end, *Who Owns This Text?* not only contributes to scholarship on plagiarism, but also–I would say more importantly–to scholarship on attitudes toward intellectual property and their relationship to the teaching of writing in the disciplines. Perhaps the most significant commonality across the disciplines studied is the lack of connection between, on the one hand, the interviewees' writing practices and their intense interest in ownership and, on the other, their approach to student writing and issues of plagiarism. This absence of connection is precisely what *Who Owns This Text?* sets out to address. But the disconnect manifests itself in the text as well: the topic of plagiarism often disappears for long stretches, as compelling issues of ownership and credit seem to continually come to the fore.

In computer science, plagiarism usually involves students using preexisting computer code without citation. The authors ask, "How could we begin to try to fit what the computer scientists were saying about code into what we knew about text?" (24). I too found myself continually, perhaps inevitably, wondering, "How does what I'm reading here relate to writing in the humanities and to composition?" My desire–and the orientation of *Who Owns This Text?*–is not to situate composition as the standard or as the place where writing matters most, but rather to deploy disciplinary differences as heuristics for thinking anew about the practices and assumptions with which I am more familiar. For example, it is standard practice in computer science pedagogy to have beginning students use ready-made code in certain instances

rather than pointlessly "reinvent the wheel" (22). But some instructors argue for the importance of practicing the foundational moves in writing code—the pedagogical value of reinventing the wheel, as it were. Against the persistent Romantic vision of the autonomous authorial genius, how can the computer science perspective allow us to reimagine the student author and the act of writing? What is our version of ready-made code or boilerplate, or what computer scientists call their "toolkit"? Genres? Lines of argument and heuristics? "Interpretive and analytical moves" (38)?

In computer science, appropriation is not only common but, depending on how one defines it, inextricable from the act of writing code. Acknowledging this helps undermine the simplistic binary of plagiarism vs. originality. But we still confront the fact that what constitutes appropriate appropriation varies from scene to scene, discipline to discipline. Regarding ownership, one interviewee states a "basic issue" in computer science as "can you patent an idea for software, can you patent an algorithm, which is just a mathematical expression of an idea on its way to becoming a piece of software, or do you patent the software itself?" (26). What, in the humanities, would correspond to the middle term, the algorithm? Lecture notes? Rough drafts of journal articles? Conference presentations? To what extent, and against whom, do we guard our work at each of these three stages: idea, "algorithm," and publication?

The chapter itself is written as a collaborative dialogue among Marvin Diogenes, Andrea Lunsford, and Mark Otuteye. Its style is at times colloquial and at times academic, featuring some slightly cringe-inducing take-offs of songs by Paul Simon and Bob Dylan and an adaptation of a familiar but not "properly" cited passage from Kenneth Burke's *Philosophy of Literary Form*. By thus performing their argument, the authors invite us to question whether, given the book's audience, this borrowing from Burke can be seen not as textual transgression but as the creative reworking of common knowledge, as part of our collective "code," or as clever use of our writerly toolkit.

Turning to the hard sciences, Lise Buranen and Denise Stephenson find that scientists, like their counterparts in other fields, are concerned about fraud in student work. But the features of scientific writing (for example, the fact that direct quotation is frowned upon) and the perception of the relationship between research and writing directs this concern less toward plagiarism than toward "the integrity of data" (51). The authors find disagreement about whether data can be owned: scientific research is "fundamentally collaborative" and its stance, at least in the case of so-called "pure" science, is marked by "disinterest," which is antithetical to the concept of ownership. The goal of science, as "the pursuit of truth, and a public truth at that" (49), is to make "'nonsubjective statement[s] about nature,'" and these "'cannot be the scientist's property'" (54). Of course, truth, nature, and objectivity are contested terms and, as the authors readily assert, not all scientists are independent, self-effacing toilers for the public good: there is plenty of corporate investment in scientific research. The authors note that even if the publication of ideas does not indicate ownership of those ideas, the attendant rewards parallel those in other disciplines: the grants, citations, and speaking engagements, which are in turn the currency of prestige and professional advancement. So even if scientists do not claim ownership of ideas, they still expect to receive credit for "gift[ing] the world with their knowledge" (57).

In publications, credit and status are indicated through elaborate, almost farcical, hierarchies of authorship, meaningful to those in the know. It is possible for scientific journal articles to have "more than a hundred names in the byline," with the position of greatest status at the *end* of this list of credits (63). The list may feature "honorary, gift, and guest authors" (63) who are credited but do not contribute to the substance of the work, the granting of a privileged position in the list to a student by a supervisor, or the usurping of top (bottom?) billing by a supervisor on a student's own graduate thesis. Ownership thus involves the right to take more of the credit or to nobly bestow it onto those of lesser status or those not even directly involved in the research. Although the

question "Who owns this text?" is important, perhaps the question, "Who gets credit for this text?" is more fundamental in regard to motives, in getting at why, within the academic scene. We so intensely desire ownership of our words.

In drawing a comparison to the humanities, the authors are surprised that scientists did not have clearer ideas "about what they owned as scholars, since their research is based in more tangible media than is the ephemera of 'personal expression'" (78). But this difference is not surprising if we compare the fields in terms of where knowledge is believed to be, and where the materials of invention lie. As opposed to the scientific perspective, most literarist scholarship remains committed, despite its theoretical assertions to the contrary, to the Romantic vision of knowledge as originating in the mind of the autonomous author. The scientific perspective is less committed to ownership precisely *because* its objects are "tangible" rather than "personal expression," because inquiry is rooted in discovery, not creation. This difference also manifests itself in science pedagogy's sane response to plagiarism. The authors find that instructors in the sciences treat errors in citation (acts which could technically be considered plagiarism) scientifically: "trial and error is to be expected" (73). Students should seek to minimize errors through repetition and through refinement of method. Here we see one pedagogical advantage of the scientific approach: plagiarism is rightly understood as indicating, in most cases, a flaw in the method, not in the character of the writer.

In chapter three, Mary R. Boland and Haviland investigate the fields of archaeology and sociology, where ownership involves such complicated matters as attempting to gain "stewardship" of a dig site, the potential of competing claims by rival archaeologists, and questions concerning the appropriation of findings which turn out to have significant economic potential. According to the standards of the Society of Professional Archaeologists, a researcher's "right of primacy" to a site is forfeited if the findings are not published within ten years. In comparison to the humanities, there are important differences between primary sites

and primary texts. A primary site can only be researched once as a primary site. Such is not at all the case with primary texts, even unique and original texts–an author's handwritten manuscript, for example. The same dynamics are certainly in play in the humanities–territoriality involving the "right" to a certain area of scholarship and resentment of upstarts, interlopers, and claim-jumpers–but such sense of ownership or entitlement is not respectable and is certainly not codified.

Many scholars in archaeology and sociology view writing as "writing up" the findings of field work. As a result, writing itself is perhaps short-changed, severed from the processes of research and "knowledge making" (90). This severing carries over to the participants' thoughts about writing instruction. Most of those interviewed assume students have learned writing elsewhere, and since writing just involves putting data into written form, writing skills learned in a composition course should be both transferable and sufficient. Absent is a pedagogy that makes explicit the disciplinary attitudes toward ownership and connects student writing with the faculty's own writing, writing which is active and rhetorical, which involves interpretation and choices, which is engaged in "knowledge making" (about which I will have more to say later).

The interviews reveal a divide between the older generation of scholars and the newer, concerning attitudes of ownership in regard to the relationship between researchers and their subjects and among researchers themselves when it comes time to divide up the work and distribute the credit. In her relationships with subjects, "one self-described feminist fieldworker" rejects the "patronizing" sociological research method of "peering at the ants under the microscope" in favor of "joining the ants to understand their sense of scene" (85). Of course, joining the ants for a while doesn't make one an ant. While the "participant-observer" stance may challenge "traditional patronizing attitudes" (86), the earnest commitment to studying the proles up close rather than from afar may reflect a different patronizing attitude. This is borne out in the authors' discussion of publication. Even though one researcher

describes herself as "a student of" her subjects rather than an owner, and other ethnographers "invite their subjects to be active participants in shaping their research projects," "this collaboration does not typically lead to sharing authorial credit" (92). So even though "the writing and publication processes are described almost as an afterthought" by researchers in these fields, as "a pragmatic issue of 'writing up' the data for dissemination" (93), it is clear that ownership of these writings is in fact highly valued, and the ants are not going to get a piece of this pie.

In the fields addressed thus far, particularly in computer science, commercial influence and investment complicates understandings in the academic context of originality, ownership, and plagiarism. In chapter four, Mullin describes the scene that seems the most chaotic in this regard, the visual arts. Many teaching artists also work in commercial arts, shuttling back and forth between a teaching context in which a degree of copying, homage, or pastiche is not only accepted but encouraged, to a commercial context in which ownership is protected by rigid and punitive copyright laws, a world in which some architects do not even want the public to photograph their buildings. At the same time, the commercial sector regularly raids the academic world for new ideas to be appropriated and redeployed for mass consumption. The content of Mullin's interviews have much to offer to a provocative discussion of pedagogy and plagiarism in composition courses. "Copying is a really, really, really useful way of learning," says one graphic artist (118). Against authoritarian "academic integrity" rhetoric, which makes all copying synonymous with plagiarism, Rebecca Moore Howard and others have written thoughtfully in defense of certain forms of copying and "patchwriting" as important stages in student writers' development. "Unlike perceptions about authorship," Mullin writes, "the practice of being an artist is . . . closely tied to individuation within an acknowledged tradition of appropriation" (127). And whereas many writing teachers condemn the Internet as a place where students can too easily do what they're not supposed to do, one of the artists interviewed sees it as a place

students can too easily do what they *are* supposed to do. "'Students are so good at the computer . . . [that] I have to get them to slow down and really look. I have to get them to see that they can't take an image as theirs and just use it as it is. They have to learn to discriminate'" (123). They have to learn, in other words, to copy well, or to move from copying to effective imitation en route to individuation. Perhaps the understanding that practice involves a degree of *imitatio* is more likely to be acknowledged and made explicit within creative writing pedagogy than in composition or literature courses, but it seems a part of the instructor's "toolkit" worth defending against the simplistic demand that students do their own work.

Provocative too are the interviews conducted with school administrators in the chapter by Linda S. Bergmann. We are now in a very different part of campus: "administrators are expected to put their names to documents they have not written" (152). Ownership of writings tends to reside in the administrative office or position rather than in the individual inhabiting that position (133). Bergmann suggests that "the very concept of intellectual property applies only tangentially to administrative discourse, if at all"–in part because administrative writing "is more closely connected to actions taken than to real property (land) held" (138–39). This is a fascinating claim, one which invites a consideration of whether the degree of intensity around issues of ownership, credit, and plagiarism depends upon whether the writing is seen as–and perhaps more importantly, judged as–"being" or "doing," as creation or action. Bergmann observes that faculty from English who go into administration seem more attached to their own "authorship" (143), and one can wonder if this too is attributable to our persistent Romanticism, the perception of texts as poetic beings rather than rhetorical doings. We might mischievously ask what would happen if we evaluated faculty writing in the humanities as if it were like administrative writing, judging it not only in terms of its originality, or treating its mere publication as the mark of accomplishment, but judging it based on whether anyone reads it and on what impact it has on the

discipline and/or the broader society. I do not think such a shift would be very popular. Though the authors do not go to this (perhaps absurd) extreme, they do assert the need to situate student writing in "real purposes" and "ongoing conversation[s]" (162).

As stated previously, plagiarism at times seems like a secondary concern in *Who Owns This Text?*, or one which is overpowered by the intensity of feeling concerning ownership, attribution, and credit. In the end, the book has less to say directly about plagiarism than about collaborative practices, beliefs about the ownership of intellectual property, and reasons for citation. Citation is inseparable from giving and wanting credit, from seeing and being seen. And while the interviews demonstrate that the desire for credit can at times be competitive, even craven, the granting and obtaining of credit can also take place in a context of gratitude, collegiality, and the perfectly normal desire to be recognized for one's accomplishments. "These readerly-writerly reasons for citation are in marked contrast with the punishment-avoidance reasons, but they surface only when we situate students as participants in the creation of knowledge" (100).

These descriptions of writing as "knowledge creation," "knowledge construction," and "knowledge making" appear often enough in the book to deserve their own moment of review. In *Who Owns This Text?* as elsewhere, these descriptions are used in company with postmodern opinions about language and identity, opinions which reject the Romantic/expressivist belief in the autonomous authorial mind. As "knowledge creation," writing is understood as a situated process, not as the transcription of original ideas from the wellspring of genius. However, the linking of both knowledge and writing with "creation" risks aligning–or, to phrase it more tendentiously, exposing the alignment of–the postmodern position with those same Romantic beliefs from which it seeks to distance itself. One of postmodernism's primary targets is the metaphysics of presence, in particular the belief that identity is singular, stable, and self-conscious, and that a writer's intentions saturate and control linguistic meaning. This belief

gives philosophical grounding to, among many other things, the Romantic stereotype of authorship and the god-terms of neo-Romantic/expressivist pedagogy: authenticity, originality, and voice. But in describing writing as making knowledge (a phrase, by the way, very similar to the expressivist perception of writing as "making meaning"), the authors have, by way of postmodernism, come full circle back to expressivism, wherein individual creativity replaces rhetorical invention and discovery. Lost along the way, in the effort to reject the pure presence of the Cartesian "I," is *motive*, the key element in Burkean rhetoric and the aspect of composition which compels us to see writing as a process of doing rather than as the creation of a textual being–in this case "knowledge." As for motive, who among us, and I include students in this "us," sits down to write with the goal of making knowledge? Rather, we write with the motive to persuade, explain, argue, refute, recommend, engage, provoke, move, identify, unite, divide, etc. By this means one might indeed hope to participate in and affect the drift of knowledge, alter its perpetual stream of dialogue, by putting in one's oar. But one can no more create knowledge single-handedly than create persuasion or agreement: it's not entirely up to the writer.

I don't think this is a matter of semantic nitpicking, especially given the topic of *Who Owns This Text?* First, the emphasis on knowledge creation threatens to undermine, or at least render contradictory, the frequent emphases in the text upon the relationship between writing and *using*, in the form of citation, appropriation, and collaboration. These emphases are important in helping to disrupt the simplistic distinction between plagiarism and originality. Second, if composition is characterized for students as making knowledge, then composition pedagogy can be of little help. There are no heuristics or strategies for making knowledge as there are for each of the rhetorical motives in my above list. As a result, we will be compelled to accept that some students simply have what it takes to make knowledge and some don't. If we communicate this perception to students, then those

constructed as the have-nots might see plagiarism as a pragmatic strategy for counterfeiting knowledge creation.

Who Owns This Text? exposes the campus-wide disconnect between faculty attitudes toward writing and ownership and the teaching of writing in the disciplines. It is important that those of us who focus on the teaching of writing examine our own assumptions about rhetoric, writing, and pedagogy in order to ensure that we are not inadvertently exacerbating the very problems we seek to ameliorate. As Rebecca Moore Howard argues, academic plagiarism is an indication that our pedagogy needs to be critically examined.

In the introduction to this provocative text, the authors invite the reader to continue the discussion; I hope it is clear from this review that their text has succeeded.