
Copyright:

This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License (http://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/) which permits any use, reproduction and distribution of the work without further permission provided the original work is attributed as specified on the SAGE and Open Access page (http://www.uk.sagepub.com/aboutus/openaccess.htm).

DOI link to published article:

http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1532708614530305

Date deposited: 9th October 2014

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported License

ePrints – Newcastle University ePrints

http://eprint.ncl.ac.uk
Practices of Authorial Collaboration: The Collaborative Production of the Contemporary Military Memoir

K. Neil Jenkings¹ and Rachel Woodward¹

Abstract
Although usually marketed as single-authored, interviews with the authors of military memoirs indicated the significance of collaboration with others throughout their writing and publication process. This paper describes the nature of these collaborations. We go on to suggest that collaborative practices were not seen by the authors as diminishing to the centrality of the named author or the reliability of their narratives. That while the collaborative roles of editors, writing coaches, and agents were evident, professional (military) colleagues and friends, family members, and military institutions played a significant role in determining memoir structures, formats, styles, and contents. We also draw attention to the research interview as itself a time and space for the collaborative co-construction by researcher and author of conceptual understanding of the memoir. We argue that understanding these collaborative practices adds to, rather than detract from, our understanding and appreciation of this genre.

Keywords
military, memoir, writing, collaboration, authorship, soldier

Introduction
This paper is about the practices of collaborative writing through which military memoirs are produced and understood. The paper draws on the findings of a study of the authorial practices around the production of the contemporary military memoir, focusing on texts published between 1980 and the present which recount authors' personal experiences of participation with the British armed forces.¹ Although usually marketed as single-authored, research with the authors of these texts indicated the significance of collaborative practices in their writing and production to degrees varying from the explicit to the incidental. This research was conducted through depth interviews with authors, which aimed at a collaborative, more symmetrical, and reflective participation by the interviewees rather than the collection of "objective facts" of a survey interview (Gorden, 1956). Through these interviews, of up to six hours in length, we explored with authors their research, writing, and production practices and the nature of this collaboration with others. In this paper, we draw conclusions about the extent to which the writing of such memoirs can be understood as a collaborative, social activity.

This paper proceeds in two parts. First, we explore the published texts themselves and indicate how the contents of these memoirs suggest collaborative practices in writing which in turn require closer investigation beyond just content analysis, and are suggestive of specific methodologies to tease out the nature and effects of this collaboration. Second, drawing on depth interviews with authors, we explore the wide range of collaborators and their inputs and contributions in determining memoir structures, formats, styles, and content. We go on to consider how collaborations which authors initially described as incidental or of relatively minor importance in the production of the text were reflexively re-evaluated during research interviews. This illustrates the role of the research interview itself as a space for collaborative co-construction of knowledge and understanding about the nature of authorship and collaboration in life-writing in general, and in the memoir form in particular (see also Jenkins, Woodward, & Winter, 2008). This reflexivity in the interview has some similarities with the collaborative writing inquiry method deployed by Gale and Wyatt (2006, 2007), although the dynamics of our face-to-face collaboration with authors (rather than by email) produces a different type of interaction irrespective of the differing subject matter. Exploring collaborative practice in military memoirs is particularly pertinent given the marketing and production practices through which the military memoir comes to be understood by a wider

¹Newcastle University, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK

Corresponding Author:
K. Neil Jenkings, Newcastle University, GPS, Daysh Building, Tyne & Wear, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE1 7RU, UK.
Email: neil.jenkings@ncl.ac.uk.
reading public as essentially the product of a sole author recounting his or her individual experience of armed conflict.

The main focus of this paper is on the reflexive accounts of collaboration by authors of military memoirs regarding their authorial practices, and is informed also by reflections on the collaborative nature of the research interview in eliciting this information. There are similarities here with the “interactive interview” method (see Gale & Wyatt, 2006). This interview material was then used by Jenkings and Woodward in their collaborative authorship of this paper. In addition, collaborative practices underpin the production of this text. Our primary purpose in this paper is to explore the reflections on collaborations of authorship by military memoirists (generally not themselves prone to Deleuzian post-structural theoretical collaborative writing as a method of inquiry), and our account of their collaboration is formally descriptive. However, it contributes to the broader project of considering collaborative writing as a method of inquiry (Gale & Wyatt, 2009) at three levels. Firstly, it describes the collaborative writing practices of non-academic writers in a little understood genre, and one oriented to commercial publication. Second, the reflexive practices of the research interview are, for both parties (interviewer and interviewee), inherently potentially collaborative for future publications—although the active participation of the memoirist may well end with the conclusion of the interview. Thirdly, the textual outcomes of this collaboration, that is, the interview data, is then used in the collaborative writing practices of Jenkings and Woodward, and while our focus is not explicitly on ourselves and our collaborative writing practices as two academics working together, we nonetheless consider the presence of our collaboration here.

Furthermore, behind the production of this finished paper—and in common with most journal papers—there are yet further collaborators in production beyond ourselves. One set of collaborators are the reviewers/editors of the first draft of this paper—the special issue editors Gale and Wyatt—usually invisible beyond acknowledgements at the end of a text. In addition, for this paper, we can also consider the regular editors of the journal, who passed comments to the special issue editors and thus on to us. In the spirit of exposition of the practices of collaborative writing, we include in this paper, then, not only reflections on the collaborative writing and inquiry practices of military memoirists, and of ourselves and interviewers engaged with co-inquiry during the research, but also reflections on our collaborative production of this text as a piece of collaborative writing, with input from both special issue and journal editors.

**The Military Memoir: Context and Method**

Military memoirs, although also read as military history, are essentially a sub-genre within a wider body of autobiographical narrative life-writing (Vernon, 2005, p. 3), and it is this autobiographical aspect which provides our starting point. Military memoirs “were originally a combination of late medieval written and oral war narratives rather than the product of some individualist revolution” (Harari, 2008, p. 56), but that was to change with the rise of the experiential memoirs of Romanticism where personal revelation was key (Ramsey, 2011). While we include within our definition the memoirs of senior commanding officers, accounts which may cover an entire military career, the genre of the military memoir is dominated by experientially based accounts primarily by junior and non-commissioned officers and ranks. These most commonly recount the experience of the ordinary soldier and his or her involvement in a specific conflict, or a specific event within a conflict. Their focus is on the individual’s experience rather than on broader reflection on the rationale for a conflict and its progress through time. They may attend to wider geopolitical concerns (Woodward & Jenkings, 2012a) and may be used to develop understanding of wider sociological, political, and anthropological issues in military participation (Brown & Lutz, 2007; Duncanson, 2011; Kieran, 2012; Kleinreesink, 2012; Woodward, 2008; Woodward & Jenkings, 2012b), but their primary focus and intent is with communication about the lived experience of participation in a specific conflict or war (Harari, 2008; Hynes, 1998; Vernon, 2005). They are almost always experientially based accounts by ground combat and infantry personnel and those working closely with them, and by aircraft pilots; accounts by rear-echelon, communications, and logistics personnel are very rare. Of over 150 in our collection of memoirs written by personnel of their experiences with British armed forces since 1980, only 5 are by women. Within the genre of the military memoir, we can identify subtypes including the recovery narrative, the action-adventure story, and the personal vindication narrative, although we do not dwell on these distinctions here.

The origins of this paper lie in our own ongoing collaborative work developing from a shared interest in the representational practices of military personnel by themselves and others (see Woodward & Jenkings, 2012c; Woodward, Jenkings, & Winter, 2011; Woodward, Winter, & Jenkings, 2010). The military memoir has been used as a significant source of secondary data about the lived experience of military personnel, in lieu of primary data collected during fieldwork; the nature of military activities means that the collection of experiential data during active deployment is often almost impossible and memoirs have utility as a secondary data source. A significant issue, however, about the use of the military memoir in this way is the question which hangs over these texts concerning their veracity, validity, and reliability. These texts are often dismissed by some academic and some military personnel themselves as inaccurate, or misleading, as propagandist or as merely ghost-written and bearing little direct relation to lived experience. Our original research, from which this paper draws,
consequently set out to address this central question of the social production of the contemporary British military memoir, investigating directly the social practices and processes shaping the journey from an individual’s personal recollections of lived experience through to the final material form of the book. As part of this research, we interviewed 21 authors using depth interviews around a common interview schedule, and choosing authors from across the range of conflicts, military roles, and memoir types occurring in the collection of over 150 texts published about participation from 1980 to the present. Memoirists ranged from ordinary soldier to Major-General. The interviews were concerned less with the details of textual content and more with the gestation, writing practices, journey to publication, and post-publication activities involved.

Key to understanding these activities and processes were the collaborative work that this journey entailed, and the work of Howard Becker (1982/2008) on art worlds was instrumental here (for example, in shaping the questions comprising the interview schedule). Becker explores the production of art as a collaborative phenomenon, and this understanding was central in shaping the ways in which we explored the development of the published memoir with individual authors.

Becker was concerned with collaborative action, that physical artifacts were the result of such collaborative action, and that much could be learned by comparing collaborative production practices and experiences. His focus was on the sequential analysis of the step-by-step production of artifacts in the coordinated activities of social networks of cooperation. Key to Becker’s method was an idea of inclusivity concerning the membership of such social networks and absence of constraint by conventions regarding the individual artist as sole author or creator. He also focused on “troubles” as central for understanding process and comparison, and influential to his thinking was Sutherland’s (1976) account of the relationships between 19th-century novelists and their publishers who “insisted on formats that maximized profits from sales to the then ubiquitous lending libraries, and in many other ways affected the content and the style of the books they published” (Becker, 1982/2008, p. xviii). Becker extrapolated beyond the role of the publisher and examined a wide variety of art forms as part of his comparative account. For Becker (1982/2008), “the dominant tradition takes the artist and artwork, rather than the network of cooperation, as central to the analysis of art as a social phenomenon” (p. xxv).

Following Becker, our exploration of military memoirists approached authors and in collaboration with them investigated the networks and experiences of cooperation and collaboration, through which memoirs are produced. Ultimately, our aim is to present authors’ accounts as they emerged in the interviews, and to draw on textual content recognizing collaborative practice within the published texts themselves, to analyze what collaborative practice might mean in the context of the military memoir.

Collaboration and Recognition in the Published Text

Our starting point in exploring collaboration was to examine in the first instance the published credits, recognitions, and acknowledgements of collaborative practice as they appear in the final material book. These paratextual elements (Genette, 1991) are instructive as a threshold or point of entry to the text, and the logic of focusing on these in the first instance is to generate an understanding of range of collaborative practices, and forms of recognition thereof, which frame these texts.

Starting with the simple fact of the attribution of a text to an author, although invariably a named individual is credited as primarily author (although there are occasional exceptions), there are multiple variations to this practice. Co-authors are credited in a range of ways. A co-author may be named, and an example here is Geordie: SAS Fighting Hero marketed as a first person account by “Geordie Doran with Mike Morgan” (2007) or Home From War by “Martin and Michelle Compton with Marnie Summerfield Smith” (2009). The use of “with” rather than “and” keeps the focus on the person whose account provides the centre for the text. The names may be presented in equally sized fonts on the front cover or may not. Commando: A Royal Marine’s Story is credited to Geoff Nordass (2009), whose experiences are recounted, with Ralph Riegel, and authorship is attributed to:

GEOFF NORDASS
WITH RALPH RIEGEL

Many author names are pseudonyms, pen-names created for the purposes of publication (famously so, in the case of Andy McNab, author of Bravo Two Zero). An interesting variation in this are the two books by Eddy Nugent (2008 & 2009). These memoirs—or perhaps anti-memoirs—written as humorous accounts of military service in the 1980s and 1990s are collaborative ventures by two ex-soldiers, Charlie Bell and Ian Deacon, writing collaboratively under a single nom de plume, but who are identified as authors individually under their own names for copyright recognition.

Even where only a single author is named on the book’s cover, the book’s acknowledgements sections illustrate the complexity of the conventions of front-cover naming and attribution, and start to indicate the collaborative practices around the writing of military memoirs. Dedications also show this. Patrick Bury’s (2010) Callsign Hades, for example, is dedicated to “ . . . Ranger Justin James Cupples. 7 Platoon, Ranger Company. The Royal Irish Regiment. Killed in Action, Sangin, 4 September 2008” and to “7 Platoon. ‘Get a Fire Goin,’” and includes also a photograph of Cupples. Dedications also demand that we keep an open mind as to what might constitute collaboration in the context of memoir production. Barry Fieldgate’s (2007) The Captain’s Steward: Falklands 1982 is
Collaboration may be thought of very broadly as more than authorship or direct influence on the production of the material book, being expressive of the Deleuzian idea of the assemblage (Deleuze & Guttari, 1987). Acknowledgements paratexts indicate the potential breadth of influence on a memoir’s production, and typical are a range of acknowledgements to a wide variety of individuals. A good example comes from Vincent Bramley’s (1991) Excursion to Hell, a Falklands memoir, which we quote in full to give a sense of the range of potential collaborative practices indicated to the reader of the book. Bramley tells the reader,

I could not have written this book without the support of the many people who read, listened and offered their advice. First let me thank Nigel Newton and David Reynolds for their guidance, Richard Dawes and Jane Stapleford for their editorial expertise, and all four for their encouragement.

On the military side, many serving and former members of 3 Para have lent their valued support, notable Johnny Cook, Dominic Grey and Grant Grinham. Also a tower of strength was Johnny Weeks, who was and always will be a professional soldier’s soldier.

Bravery is not confined to the field of action. In this connection I cannot thank enough Rita and Bill Hedicker, who allowed me to relate the tragic death of their son and my friend, Pete. This is a bravery and strength of a special order.

I should like to thank my family: Fred, Pam and Brian, who have unfailingly supported me through thick and thin; and my brother Russell, who gave me invaluable encouragement from the start.

Finally, my thanks to Wally Camfield, formerly of 3 Para, who inspired me to join that elite regiment.

In this acknowledgement, the broad spectrum of collaborators acknowledged includes agents, editors, former colleagues, family members, the parents of a soldier whose death is related in the book, and the person who encouraged the author to join the Army. Although the list of acknowledgements is extensive—and Bramley’s list is fairly typical of many memoirs in its range and length—there is little detail about the role of these individuals and the nature and timing of their contribution or collaborative activities. We should also note that although frequent, lists of acknowledgements are not ubiquitous. Patrick Bury’s (2010) Callsign Hades, as noted above, is dedicated to a fallen colleague but contains no formal acknowledgements, and in Bramley’s (1994) second book Two Sides of Hell the acknowledgements are built into an introduction section. In other cases, acknowledgement paratexts may run from one or two lines to three pages (e.g., Dannatt, 2010). Some acknowledgements are placed at the front of the text and others at the end (e.g., Macy, 2008). The lack of formal acknowledgements then does not mean that collaborators have not been involved nor that the author does not recognize their input.

Alert, then, to the potential significance of collaborative practices underpinning the production of the final, material book, our research proceeded to explore through interviews with authors the nature of these practices, and we proceed now to explore what, in practical terms, collaboration might mean in memoir production.

**Forms of Collaborative Practice in Memoir Writing and Publication**

Because there is no single route common to all the authors interviewed as to the forms, timing, quantity, and quality of collaboration, we proceed in this section to examine this process with reference to the common chronological processes around the journey of the memoir from lived experience to the production of the material book. We travel, then, from the initial impetus to write a memoir, through the writing of the text, the research and memory work undertaken, the input of readers and editors of first drafts of the manuscript, to the identification of publishers and copieditors, and consider also the problems and issues raised by the inclusion of others in the production of the finished book.

**The Initial Impetus to Write**

Collaboration in the production of military memoirs starts with the initial impetus to write a book. Instrumental collaborators, although not ubiquitous, are frequent figures in this story. Authors who have an existing “platform” from which to speak (see Thompson, 2010), may be approached by agents or publishers. Simon Weston, a Welsh Guardsman seriously wounded with burns injuries during the 1982 Falklands War, had been the subject of a television documentary following his rehabilitation journey, and the first of his three memoirs, Walking Tall (Weston, 1989), was simply a textual and detailed reflection on that process initiated on the back of public interest in this single figure and the result of an approach by a publisher. General Sir Richard Dannett, who had been a controversial Chief of General Staff, was approached by a number of literary agents mindful that as
the man charged with overseeing armed forces involvement during a particularly difficult period of the Afghanistan War (i.e., 2006-2009), there would be value in publishing an account of his career, and of his leadership during the war. Jake Scott (2008), author of Blood Clot: In Combat With the Patrols Platoon, 3 Para Afghanistan, 2006, was approached by a publisher after the author’s father’s serendipitous encounter with him.

The majority of memoirists started writing individually, and for most of these, recruitment of others started at this early stage—and for some, at a very early stage. Fieldgate, for example, had informed his colleagues on the HMS Broadsword that he intended to write a book about his ongoing Falklands War experiences, and from then on they began to slip him information, often quite literally under his cabin door, in the form of documentation that they thought would be useful in that anticipated project. Macy had also informed his colleagues working with him as part of an Apache helicopter squadron of his intention to write a book, of the fact that they would inevitably be mentioned, and of potential input they might have, ranging from the invention of pseudonyms to providing information to ensure a more accurate account of squadron activities in Afghanistan.

The influence of family members was also significant as an impetus to start writing. Authors reported writing for their children—one, for example, had become slightly estranged from his teenage son and intended his book as an intermediary in their faltering relationship. More common was the idea that an individual’s experiences might simply be of interest to subsequent generations. Parents, spouses, and siblings were also a motivator. Doug Beattie’s (2008) An Ordinary Soldier in his published acknowledgements and in a concluding chapter places credit for the book’s inception with his wife’s reading of notes he had made on returning from a tour of Afghanistan, notes produced as a mechanism for ordering his thoughts after a series of traumatic and violent encounters.

It is also pertinent to reflect at this point on the second story running through this paper, about our own motivations for writing. We, too, had “instrumental collaborators,” in the form of the special issue editors—on seeing a call for papers, we emailed them to inquire about the relevance of our research for this edition, and we then submitted an abstract, which was accepted. A paper was written and submitted, the special edition editors made suggestions for strengthening the paper, these were undertaken, and the paper returned. This is a process that our readers here will most likely be very familiar with. There is nothing inherently unusual in our experiences. Our point here, rather, is to emphasize, first, the circumstantial (almost random) way in which academic papers emerge; this paper originated in Neil’s chance reading of one email among many with the call for papers, Rachel thought it a good idea, and so the process proceeded. Second, as with the memoirists, instrumental collaborators (our editors) were significant. Third, we have our own motivations for wanting to write—for wanting to share with a broader academic readership much of our interest in the military memoirs we study, and to try and move academic debates on from the often-uninformed and cursory dismissal these books sometimes generate from academic readerships.

Writing, Researching, Remembering

Some authors would recall their writing as solo endeavors. As Vince Bramley put it, “No honestly Neil, I was locked in the back of a room and that was it.” Although some would keep to this phenomenological account of the writing experience throughout their interview, the inputs of “others” and the collaborative nature of writing emerged once words started to be put onto paper. This is perhaps indicative of a change in reflexive awareness of collaboration once writing becomes an embodied activity centered on a material object(ive) rather than a discursive “desire.” Macy, who engaged with his colleagues while on active service, explains this collaboration thus:

“I’d ask them questions and they’d all be willing to get round . . . So I would interact with the boys when we came off a battle and I would say to them, like Jake,”

“Jake”

“Yeah?”

“Right I need to get the facts down, when you said you did this and did this why did you think we’d fired into our own troops?”

He went, “It wasn’t me it was John.”

“John why did you think that we’d fired into the compound?”

“Well when they said there was fire landing in the compound I assumed you’d missed the target.”

“Ah, right,”

So I wrote that down . . . they knew I was writing it all down and all my mates were all taking part.4

Macy was in no doubt that he is the author of his book. Yet through his description of the writing process, he was clear that this was a collaborative endeavor.

A number of the authors remarked on the importance of contacting old colleagues and talking to them about the period covered by their memoir. Such activities would jog the memory, and also provide another’s perspective on events, which the author could then reflect on and potentially build into their own account. This was an essential
activity. As Steven Preece, author of *Among the Marines* and *Always a Marine* (Preece, 2004/2005), noted,

... there were some things when we were talking, you know, we would reminisce and we'd laugh about what we used to get up to but ... I think he was probably reminding [me] what I did.

Simon Weston (1989) notes this was often facilitated by the "family" nature of membership of certain British Regiments:

The boys are easily contacted, you know ... very much a family orientated regiment you know. People are very friendly; people are very warm ... So phoning them up and asking them to be involved in something is very easy because they'd have no problem. They would be happy with that.

Weston also notes how such contacts and occasions to talk would be facilitated by events such as reunions. Contacting others was not just about jogging the memory or getting the insight of others, but could also be about verification. Accuracy was a concern of authors and as Rick Jolly (1983), a Royal Navy Surgeon and author of the Falklands memoir *The Red and Green Life Machine*, noted,

Well nobody else was involved in writing the book, but it was just to make sure you had your facts right and you would ask the person who was in a position to provide them ... If I was unsure then I could ask anyone I liked, just ring up and ask them a particular eh, point.

Some authors would meet or phone former colleagues, and much of their communication choice was shaped by available events and telephone numbers. Yet such informal methods were not always seen as appropriate. As Nick Vaux (1986), author of *March to the South Atlantic*, explained,

... if you went to a reunion and listened to everybody who had a story to tell you, and then you went and put it in the book pretty soon it would be conflicting and confusing and largely highly exaggerated or selectively told ... that's why when I consulted mainly the Company Commanders and the principal players I did it all in writing so that, you know, they had time to think about it and what they then sent back to me I could reflect on quietly rather than try to remember what they said to me.

In some instances, collaboration extended to using the written accounts of others in the author’s own account to supplement the author’s own text. For Nick Vaux, for example, who as a commanding officer had overseen but not actually engaged directly with some of the activities he wanted to recount in his book, it was necessary to include the accounts of two other officers in his text. Similarly, Barry Fieldgate wove into his text the accounts of others including material from his ship’s reunion website (with the necessary permissions).

These accounts illustrate the degrees and types of collaboration that can occur during the writing process both in terms of recalling events and verifying them. These collaborations are then woven into the account if relevant to the author’s narrative.

Again, there are parallels with our own practices of collaborative writing. We have produced a number of papers together, and in combination with other individuals and smaller groups. While these forms of collaboration are transparent and obvious, with the attribution of named authors indicating this, there are nuances to this which echo the comments of memoirists. Our own colleagues and family members, from time to time, provide either explicit or unanticipated input to our writing, both through comments on drafts and through chance remarks and comments. These are rarely formally acknowledged (beyond, sometimes, an acknowledgement section at the end of a paper) but are sometimes highly significant in the adoption, for example, of specific emphases or lines of inquiry.

**Readers and Editors**

Some of the younger authors wrote their books at their parental home and so could involve others throughout the writing process, and not just once a complete draft had been produced. Patrick Bury noted,

I was at home so Mum and Dad were reading it as I wrote it, you know almost without saying. I was doing 2,000 [words] which they might read every three or four days—they would want to read what was going on because they were kind of immersed in it ...

Other authors who were writing at their marital home sometimes had their spouse engaged throughout. For Kevin Ivison (2010), author of *Red One: A Bomb Disposal Expert on the Front Line* noted being

... really lucky that my wife was really willing to go through every chapter with me many, many, times and we’d throw ideas back and forth and she’d say you know this bit is unnecessary or you haven’t explained that bit enough ... there was a constant back and forth with me and my wife all the way through, bashing, and it did feel like bashing the story into shape you know like metalwork, get rid of this paragraph, add another paragraph in, in some cases get rid of entire chapters, get rid of entire characters and I actually found that the more I got rid of the happier I was with the story.

Ed Macy was also keen to recognize the role of his wife:

Incredible. Editing, re-editing. What I should include, what I shouldn’t include ... as a collaborator she worked non-stop on the book all the way through it. And bearing in mind she was doing other things as well. She had her job to do, she’s a ...
Simon Bywater (2003), in writing Forced Out, a memoir of service with the Royal Marines in the First Gulf War and its aftermath, was clear about the collaborative work that was involved in the early stages of the memoirs, even sending a copy halfway round the world to an aunt in New Zealand, stating,

I think you know it’s when you do write anything . . . yourself you need to rely on other people to give you that, it’s almost a confidence thing as well, don’t you . . . I relied on people, to be honest with me just to help the story unfold really and get it down to how it is . . .

Other authors noted the editorial input of friends who read drafts. Geoff Nordas relates,

Well I gave it to a couple of my mates to read and they influenced me, one of them influenced me on what he thought and, he was honest with me, and he was telling me “you ought to get rid of that because it’s not necessary,” he said “otherwise the rest of it is good,” but that was a very, very early draft and I added a lot to it after that before I actually had a good copy.

Even for “Eddy Nugent,” the creation of two authors and obviously a collaboration in its own right, one of the authors recognized the significance of the input of others:

So it was always pretty much just me and him but a small circle of friends that we used to, sort of, like send bits of the book to, say have a read of that see what you think.

Family and friends would not only be involved in encouraging writing and facilitating recall, but they could be involved in the early (and later) editorial process. These collaborative activities can be seen as intertwined, but also key in encouraging the authorial processes and providing initial feedback in its early stages.

Finding an Agent and/or Publisher

Not all the published memoirists set out originally to write and publish a book. For Vince Bramley,

. . . I didn’t actually set out to write this as a book . . . it wasn’t actually set out to be published it was initially for my father to say look, Dad, stop moaning at me: “go away and read that.” He read it, got the education, and it was my family, my brother forwarded it [to a publisher].

Some authors were fortunate in being approached by an agent or publisher before starting their memoir. The majority had to go out and find one. Even this finding could be a case for collaboration with others. Ed Macy recalled finding an agent:

My wife did it by buying the Writers and Artists Yearbook and reading through it very, very carefully to work out all the bits and pieces. And then . . . she then started to scour internet sites over the last four years to see if any agents came up. And she said “there’s one agent keeps coming up” and said “have a read of this,” and it was the Top 100 most influential people in media in the UK. . . . She said “you know, the only way you’re going to do this, if you’re going to do this”—because I said I wanted to do this for a living—. . . “is to do it properly and that means go for the very best . . .”

Macy still had to contact and convince the agent to take him on, but finding the agent was collaborative and indicative of background collaboration. Even when the agent or publisher contacts the potential author, others may be involved. Jake Scott when approached to write a memoir was not initially inclined to do so; his father persuading and encouraging him to take up the project was key, and Scott emphasized this:

He said “you could write a book about Iraq as well” and I said this is not something I want to do, to become a massive author, you know. It’s not what I set about doing; but he was sort of, he [had] sort of become very keen on the idea.

The Input of Editors and Publishers

The collaboration with agents, editors, and publishing departments varied, but a common experience was of authors recognizing that they were out of their area of expertise and had to rely on others. Even Patrick Hennessey, author of the Afghanistan memoir The Junior Officers’ Reading Club and one of the most highly educated and literate of the authors (he holds a degree in English Literature from Oxford University), recognized his lack of publishing knowledge and the need for collaboration:

I think it would have been a difficult enough book to write and edit, you know, if I’d known what I was doing—the fact [was] that I was coming in completely blind so you know those guys had to walk me through.”

This was a common experience for all first-time authors, and thus common for agents, editors, and publishers too. These professionals may become significant collaborators and Kevin Ivison was not the only author to remark that “well the key people are my agent and my editor.” Ivison noted that

. . . an agent is critical because, especially for someone like me who doesn’t really know the industry, they can give you lots of really good advice on how to structure a book and in the end it was pretty much as I imagined it, but you know nonetheless it was good advice and he’s also really critical in knowledge of the industry.

The agent can be critical in negotiating a deal with a publishing house, especially the larger ones. There an editor may become involved, in Ivison’s case he recognized that the editor then
Non-Hallucinated text:

... took me to a new level of detail, so he, the very first thing he did after receiving the manuscript was go through it line by line, word by word with a pencil and just you know changed words, adjust colons to semi-colons, get rid of entire paragraphs, say that this page needs to swap with that page.

These collaborations were steep learning curves for the authors, as Macy illustrates:

So I spent about a month writing one chapter and at the end of it he said “you’re still not quite getting it, you’re going to have to take some formal instruction.” And at that point he brought a guy in to show me how to do it and we sat down together and we worked on a whole chapter. And at the end I, a light goes [on], “that’s how to do it!” and I kept this guy with me and we worked all the way through the book to get it put into the first person, because I didn’t appreciate how to do it.

Macy was fortunate in that his publishing team were prepared to invest in his book and him as an author making resources available. Others—more senior officers—were able to utilize personal contacts. Nick Vaux, who had commanded 42 Commando Royal Marines, did not enlist an agent, but rather drew on his friendship with the journalist and war historian Max Hastings, who had reported from the Falklands during the war and who Vaux thus knew, who identified two publishers who he suggested would give Vaux’s book serious consideration. Vaux chose the smaller of the two so as to get more personal attention and dealt with the owner of the publishing house direct.

He would have been the one who . . . set a kind of final length . . . and proposed . . . how much you put in each chapter and so on . . . I sent to him chapters and he initially would come back with a sort of broad brush points . . .

There are also collaborative practices around the maps, covers, and imagery within military memoirs. Nick Vaux sought out his own artist to draw the maps for his book, whereas Patrick Bury at a larger publisher left the production of maps for the production team to deal with. Author interactions with designers included collaboration around the choice of photographs to include within the book (the majority include color plates using authors’ and their colleagues’ photographs) and the design of the front cover, a key feature for marketing (see Woodward & Jenkings, 2012d). The extent and nature of this collaboration is exemplified well by Patrick Bury who clearly considered that the production of the finished book was a “group production, by the end of it.”

Editorial work is not confined to family members and formally via publishing houses. Nick Vaux noted how even during the production of the first drafts, during the process through which his hand-written notes were typed up by a professional typist, collaborative practices emerged; the typist herself had useful editorial comments on the notes she was helping form into a book, providing...

... perceptive . . . comments, so she would type it all out beautifully and send it back and then at the bottom she’d write, you know, “I think you’ve over-done it there” or “why don’t you . . . elaborate on that.”

The Problems of Collaborative Production

Despite the many benefits to the many different forms of collaborative practice which our authors described, collaboration in writing is not always productive or unproblematic. Jerry Pook (2009), author Flying Freestyle: An RAF Fast Jet Pilot’s Story, when starting to write, contacted those involved in the accounts he intended to relate to tell them of the book’s production and to ask them if they would like “to put your side of the story.” However,

... this chap, this Navy guy . . . sent me this story and then he subsequently said “you can’t use it.” So I rather was disenchanted with that process. I realized if I was going to do that big time with a lot of people, I would probably get quite a few rejections particularly from the Navy side. They were protecting their own, I think . . . they pulled up the drawbridge and closed ranks.

Nick Vaux also noted issues regarding potential input from superior officers: “if he and I disagreed about . . . and he said ‘no’ you know it would be . . . a bit difficult.” Barry Fieldgate had been given an offer of assistance in the earliest stages of writing, but this had come to nothing and he’d wasted time, in his view, waiting for the promised assistance to materialize. Richard Dannatt had had initial discussions with a potential co-author suggested by his agent, but had proceeded ultimately to write his first draft alone before engaging with collaborators for copyediting.

Again, it is interesting to parallel memoirists experiences of the problems of collaborative writing and production with our own. Returning again to the second story in this paper, we can consider how we engaged with the “problem” of positioning ourselves and our collaborative practices within the paper. We received paraphrased comments from the journal editors following those of the special edition editors, suggesting that we write ourselves into the text in ways suggested by the conceptual insights provided by methods of collaborative writing as a critical practice. One of the authors declared themselves confused by the editorial comments, and in response, the other noted,

I think that basically we have not written our own subjective writing practices into the text as a critical method: and that it is almost the case that, what we are doing now, critically talking about what our own presence (or lack of it) in the text, in a collaborative reflexiveness, is what is absent. Of course now it
is not just ourselves, at least as the topic of our paper illustrates, but the reviewers who have entered as OUR collaborators. So the position of the paper is, a traditional analytic account about the nature of collaboration between authors and “non-authors” where they have been reflecting on their collaboration with others.

These authors have collaborated with us at the “data collection” stage, and we have used their voices, in conversation with me in the interviews. But then we have written the paper, me doing a first draft—after discussions that we should actually write the paper in the first place—and then your reading through and writing your ideas in and developing those there from me. Of course this then all starts to get blurred as we merge ourselves together from “Jenkins” and “Woodward” to “Jenkins & Woodward,” or “Jenkward” as we playfully call ourselves in our collaborations. Now of course, we then got input after we submitted the first version from the Special Edition editors “Gale and Wyatt” and after discussing what they suggested, that we brought our own collaboration out more. The version of that text was then submitted by “Gale and Wyatt” to the Journal for review by them. Denzin and Giardina have then come back and said we have not shown our own collaborative practices of writing to the degree that other writer have, even though our intention was to show that the writing practices of single author memoirs were revealed to be collaborative affairs and this became evident in the collaborative practices of the interview—which was then transcribed into a text by transcriptionists that I then edited and initially coded, which you then read and analysed, and then we both discussed. Now we are discussing what the journal editors as reviewers are saying, which is, could WE not be written more into the text to be published. Interestingly, it is now at this fifth level of discussion of the original phenomena i.e. that of the military memoir writers, that we are attending to our own collaborative writing. This reflexivity is due to our increasing awareness from writing about it, and being coaxed into increasing awareness by the editors (at Special Edition and journal level). Ironically we are now engaged, or at least this would constitute a first turn in describing our collaborative practices, this is similar in its reflexivity to a paper by Gale and Wyatt about their email correspondences with each other, perhaps even more so, but differently. Of course this email and discussion is in this format because you have gone off to conference in Poland, as normally we would talk about our writing, rather than write about it, because we both have offices on the same floor of the same building of the same university—or we might have discussed what we might write over beers at The Trent House.

The question is should we write ourselves into the paper post hoc in some fashion, and if so how? Or should we try to illustrate and elaborate our increasing critical collaborative reflexively via these emails and see if that, this, would then produce an informative post-script, as in the style of the Gale & Wyatt paper I mentioned above? I think the latter would be interesting. I mean the thing that stood out for me was that when I saw the call for papers I thought our research would be an interesting potential opening, or closing, paper for the special edition as it was a more traditional approach to the collaborative writing of military memoir authors who often initially denied much in the way of collaboration until “provoked” into reflection by the interview, i.e. in collaboration with me, (ironically we have now been provoked into similar reflection!). We discussed this and I sent off an email to Gale asking whether he was interested in such a paper, he invited us to put in an abstract which I wrote and I ran by you before sending off. We were then selected for the journal and I wrote a first draft from the coded interviews from the military memoirs research project, after verbal discussion with you, and knowing of course what we thought of the data and the practices, but had not written-up. I went first as it was “my turn” and I had initiated the project and was into the reflexive character of the interview process and had led on a paper on that for the military photography project. In writing this I am hoping to provoke you into accepting this as part of a collaborative post-script, and give you a voice next. Otherwise you can take this as answering your question as to what I think the journal editors’ comments are about. (Text of email from one author to the other, September 2013)

Collaborative writing and collaborative inquiry, then, is never unproblematic. We return to the final part of this story below.

Discussion

As our research has indicated, while military memoirs are marketed as the product of a single authorial voice, a range of collaborative practices during the writing and production show the significance of others to the production of the final material book, and that these evolve over the period of the book’s production. This should not be a surprise as writing is a socially embedded activity, positioned in everyday routines of work and social life. Three points follow from this. The first is the extent to which, despite often significant levels of input from others, authorship remained an unproblematic concept for the authors. All were adamant that their memoirs were their books, indicating the centrality of their experiences of military participation to the concept of authorship. To put it another way, authorship was a non-issue for the memoirists. Collaboration was a practical rather than a conceptual issue for authors. Burke (1995) suggests that the concept of authorship has been changing since Plato onwards, and we cannot rehearse that literature here. What is of interest is that the debates over author(ship), and what can be attributed to such an entity, take the author as a singularity. There is little discussion of joint authorship and the practices thereof. Burke (1995) suggests that it is now useful to see the problems of

the author-debate arise from the failure to realize that the notion of the author has been falsely analogized with the transcendent/impersonal subject and that the only way to deconstruct the latter subject is not to replace it with theories of language, différence, anonymity, écriture feminine and so on,
but to reposition authorship as a situated activity present not so much to itself as to culture, ideology, language, difference, influence, biography. (p. xxvi)

We agree with this idea of the socially situated nature of authorship, but through this empirical investigation following Becker (1982/2008) hope to have illustrated some of the interactional practices of this situated activity as socially situated and interactional and not of an autonomous individual. Thus, following Becker we can flesh-out situated activity and illustrate aspects of the “culture, ideology, language, difference, influence, biography” Burke indicates, as social phenomena. We are respecifying authorship from a theoretical object to socially situated social practices that members of society engage in when “doing authorship.”

Our second point, and following on from the first, is about the extent of collaborative practice beyond the production of the text and the socially complex nature of “authorship.” This can be illustrated by these research interviews our “authors” engaged in, and that these too are collaborative interactive processes where “authorship” practices continued and colluded with our new “authorship” activities and resembled the interactive interviews of collaborative writing as method of inquiry (Gale & Wyatt, 2006, 2007) although through a verbal medium. Although as we have shown, many discussions had taken place between authors and others about the content of their book, the actual authorship process had not been. The “simple” act of writing the memoir had just not been a topic for sustained conversation for many of the authors until the interview, even for those who had engaged in post-publication public relations activities. The research interview thus becomes a time and space for collaborative co-construction of knowledge between “author” and researcher as they together search for meaning in the process of authorial production. It is another site of “doing authorship” for the author, yet also contributing collaboratively, through the production of interview data, into the “authorship” practices that constitute this “Jenkings and Woodward” text that Jenkins and Woodward, for all practical purposes (Garfinkel, 1967), will be understood as authors. Thus, just as the authors of the memoirs, despite collaboration, unproblematically remain as single named producers of the text, we as authors of this account claim sole “authorship” for this text while acknowledging the significance of the collaboration of others, including the interviewed “authors.” This illustrates our point that “authorship” is in part a collaborative socially situated activity, and a relatively mundane one at that. Indeed, while Jenkins and Woodward have collaborated on a number of written texts together, and have referred to these as “Jenkward” productions to ourselves and interested colleagues, our collaborative work has been at a mundane practical achievement rather than a method of inquiry in itself. However, as the “Jenkward” authorship tag playfully illustrates we are well aware that our collaborative practices are not singular turn-taking endeavors at production by singular authors, but interactional and met at the text. However, our collaborative working practices, while definitely relying on the “threshold” that the text provides (Mazzei & Jackson, 2012) also has other dynamics. Our own collaborative practices vary from collaboration to collaboration both in identifying projects, initiating them, and seeing them through to publication and beyond. We work in the same University department most of the time, and frequently on the same corridor, thus our collaboration has a large face-to-face component to it as well as the digital and printed text. We work on numbers of projects and papers at the same time and there are overlap and separation practicalities in the achievement of these. Each “Jenkward” collaboration also involves others, sometimes “co-authors,” but also editors and reviewers who are acknowledged formally in the appropriate part of the text. Writing this paper has made us more aware of these practices, although they were also the subject of the initial research—although of military memoirist rather than ourselves. Like Mazzei and Jackson (2012), we are not necessarily fully conscious of our collaborative practices for we are engaged in them for practical ends, like the military memoir authors, only when we step aside from that collaboration to reflect upon it, or when we engage in collaboration specifically as a form of inquiry, do we gain a fuller appreciation of what is involved. Both approaches we believe have much to give each other.

The third point concerns socio-technical change and the facilitation of collaboration. We do not wish to over-determine the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in enabling authorship, but if authorship is to be seen as collaborative and situated within “culture, ideology, language, difference, influence, biography” (Burke, 1995)—and that list is not definitive—then understanding the influence of technology is key to understanding collaborative practices, past present and future. Our research has occurred on the cusp of technological change not just in terms of digital publications and what constitutes a “published” memoir, but how collaboration is undertaken. Undoubtedly, it will still at times involve face-to-face interaction, the spoken audio or audio-visual, even the printed word, but what was evident when we spoke to authors who had published over the last thirty years was that technology is changing at a pace, and both what and how collaboration occurs and what can be understood as “authorship” is not a static activity. Authorship as we have described it is a practical accomplishment, not just esoteric endeavor, and much can be understood if it is looked at as collaborative work. The social sciences have undertaken detailed studies of collaborative production of “mundane” texts including medical and court records (Dupret, 2011; Lynch & Bogen, 1996) and also how technology has
influenced their “authorship” and collaboration practices (Heath & Luff, 2000; Rouncefield & Tolmie, 2011). Literature and memoirs have not been included in these studies to any great degree, but they may have much to learn from each other.

To Conclude

We have seen the formal account to the end of its story; it is now time to conclude the collaborative writing of the authors with the editors, with the response to the prior email:

Right, I’ve slept on this, and thought about this, and think the solution you suggested when we last talked about it is the right one, i.e. you add the ideas as a post-script, and send it off again with a politely worded comment to the effect that . . . we think it brings something to the debate.

To be honest, I’m really reluctant to go down the route suggested by Norman and Michael—about writing ourselves more explicitly into the texts—in this piece. It’s not exactly what we do. To be a bit more pompous about it, the Jenkward brand seems to me to be about having friendly but critical distance from the memoirs. (Email from one author to the other, September 2013)

Thus, while this is not a straightforward paper on collaborative writing as a critical method, it does suggest add to the theme of collaborative writing as both how it is investigated as a traditional sociological topic and also how engaging in the special issue project reflexively engaged us in the theme of collaborative writing as a critical method. Although one which we felt could not be easily retrospectively applied to the collaborative writing about military memoirs as we had aimed to, but was a project we were made aware of for the future.

What will be now evident is that “Gale and Wyatt” saw their role as collaborators as not leaving their input, at the stage we anticipated, but by persuading us that the postscript we had written could be incorporated into the text instead of rewriting ourselves ‘in’ in the way that we had been wary of. Although this way of approaching the subject matter was not how we—“Jenkings and Woodward”—had anticipated the paper. Its evolution, as briefly shown, illustrates the collaborative nature of writing, and not just between named authors but others too—which was of course the original aim of the original paper. In doing so “we” hope that it illustrates the nature of both approaches, and that they can be surprisingly—at least to “us,” mutually reinforcing and illustrative.

In this paper, we look at the social production of a specific genre of book, the military memoir, and how this is a collaborative exercise in practice, even if attributed traditionally to a named individual or individuals. We also reflect upon our own authorial practices and the collaboration involved in this. What we have done in both instances is to look at writing collaboration from the perspective of the named authors involved and the contribution of others. We attempt to write back into the production of the written text the collaboration that is written out in formal accounts, depending on the genre and authorial postionings. This is part of a reimagining and repositioning of the accepted role and status of “the author.” This is significant because, in the case of the military memoir, these books are often critical of the military; they give voice to the concerns of the ordinary soldier and the communities they belong to, operating in often authoritarian institutions and hierarchies. Their critical accounts are too frequently and easily dismissed as those of the “disenchanted individual” regardless of their veracity. However, by seeing them as part of the collaborative work of more than the individual, and re-imagining the communities of practice that are involved, these critiques are more robust and dismissals are less easily promulgated. The memoir is increasingly part of a call for social justice, as the example of (primarily) Latin American “testimonio” literature shows (see Woodward & Jenkings, 2012a). To accommodate such accounts in the social sciences, we need to move toward a post-positivistic understanding of “authorship,” that we suggest involves not just an orientation toward the writing of “others” but also reflexively with regards our practices of “authorship.”

Acknowledgments

This project and paper was dependant on the participation and freely given collaboration of the memoir authors themselves to whom we are extremely indebted. The development of the final argument of this paper was in response to the call for papers by Ken Gale and Jonathan Wyatt and their suggestions and supportive editorial comments on draft versions throughout. It also benefited from some insightful comments from Norman Denzin and Michael Giardina. To all our named and unnamed collaborators we are grateful, thank you one and all.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This paper has been a collaborative project throughout and supported by numerous people and institutions. In particular, we would like to note the support in the production of a grant application and ongoing support given during the research process by colleagues at Newcastle University. There was input in its evaluation and funding by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (RES-062-23-1493) and its anonymous reviewers.
Notes
2. Too Few Too Far: The True story of a Royal Marine Commando, although written as the first person account of George Thomsen, is credited to Malcolm Angel, and Thomsen is not credited on the cover or spine of the book. This is an exception to the general rule that the individual whose experiences provide the basis for the memoir is credited as author (see Angel, 2008).
3. Author interview, November 2008.
4. All quotations are from author interviews undertaken for the research project in 2010 and 2011, unless otherwise stated.

References


Author Biographies

K. Neil Jenkins is Senior Research Associate in the School of Geography, Politics and Sociology, Newcastle University, UK. His research interests include the production and use of texts and images in social action. This research includes the representations of military personnel in texts (particularly military memoirs) and images (particularly personal photographs). In addition, he researches the use of texts in interaction and health care. He has recently also published on the interaction and communication practices of rock climbers, including a focus on the practical use of climbing guidebooks. He has previously been awarded ESRC funding the social production of the contemporary British military memoir. He is currently working on a major ESRC-funded study of the university service units with Alison Williams and Rachel Woodward.

Rachel Woodward is Professor of Human Geography in the School of Geography, Politics and Sociology, Newcastle University, UK. Her research interests include the sociology and culture of military institutions and militarism, representations of the soldier in texts (particularly military memoirs) and images (particularly personal photographs), military geographies and military landscapes. She is the author of Military Geographies (Blackwell, 2004) and Sexing the Soldier: the Politics of Gender and the Contemporary British Army (with Trish Winter, Routledge, 2007), and has been awarded ESRC funding for studies of gender and the British Army, constructions of soldier identity in print media and personal photography, and the social production of the contemporary British military memoir. She is currently working on a major ESRC-funded study of the university service units with K. Neil Jenkins and Alison Williams.