

The Author's Place in the Future of Copyright¹

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“In the beginning was the Reader.” And the Reader, in a Pirandello-esque flash of insight, went in search of an Author, for the Reader realized that without an Author, there could be no Readers. But when the Reader met an Author, the Author, anticipating Dr. Johnson, scowled, “No man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money.”²

And the Reader calculated the worth of a free supply of blockhead-written works against the value of recognizing the Author's economic self-interest. She concluded that the Author's interest is also her interest, that the “public interest” encompasses *both* that of authors and of readers. So she looked upon copyright, and saw that it was good.

THIS, in essence, is the philosophy that informs the 1710 English Statute of Anne (the first copyright statute), and the 1787 U.S. Constitution's copyright clause. The latter provides that “Congress shall have Power . . . to promote the Progress of Science by securing for limited Times to Authors . . . the exclusive Right to their Writings . . .” (U.S. Const., art. I, § 8, cl. 8). In the Anglo-American system, copyright enabled the public to have what Thomas Babbington Macaulay heralded as “a supply of good books” and other works that promote the progress of learning.³ Copyright did this by assuring authors

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²Samuel Johnson, in *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, 328 (John Bartlett and Justin Kaplan, eds., 17th ed. 2002) (quoting James Boswell, *Life of Johnson* [5 Apr. 1776]).

³Thomas B. Macaulay, Speech before the House of Commons (5 Feb. 1841), in *Macaulay: Prose and Poetry*, 733–34 (G. M. Young, ed., 1970).

“the exclusive Right to their . . . Writings”—that is, a property right giving authors sufficient control over and compensation for their works to make it worth their while to be creative.⁴

Vesting copyright in authors—rather than exploiters—was an innovation in the eighteenth century. It made authorship the functional and moral center of the system. But all too often in fact, authors neither control nor derive substantial benefits from their work. In the copyright polemics of today, moreover, authors are curiously absent; the overheated rhetoric that currently characterizes much of the academic and popular press tends to portray copyright as a battleground between evil industry exploiters and free-speaking users.⁵ If authors have any role in this scenario, it is at most a walk-on, a cameo appearance as victims of monopolist “content owners.” The disappearance of the author moreover justifies disrespect for copyright—after all, those downloading teenagers aren’t ripping off the authors and performers; the major record companies have already done that.⁶

Two encroachments, one long-standing, the other a product of the digital era, cramp the author’s place in copyright today. First, most authors lack bargaining power; the real economic actors in the copyright system have long been the publishers and other exploiters to whom authors cede their rights. These actors may advance the figure of the author for the moral luster it lends their appeals to lawmakers, but then may promptly despoil the creators of whatever increased protections they may have garnered. Second, the advent of new technologies of creation and dissemination of works of authorship not only challenges

⁴U.S. Const., art. I, § 8, cl. 8. Both the Statute of Anne (England 1710), and the U.S. Constitution’s copyright clause highlight the role of exclusive rights in promoting the progress of learning.

⁵See, e.g., Joe Nocera, “A Tight Grip Can Choke Creativity,” *N.Y. Times*, 9 Feb. 2008, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/09/business/09nocera.html> (decrying J. K. Rowling’s infringement suit against for-profit publisher of *The Harry Potter Encyclopedia*); Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture: How Big Media Uses Technology and the Law to Lock Down Culture and Control Creativity* (2004); Electronic Frontier Foundation, *Intellectual Property*, <http://www.eff.org/issues/intellectual-property> (last visited 19 Oct. 2008); Matthew Green, Note, “Napster Opens Pandora’s Box: Examining How File-Sharing Services Threaten the Enforcement of Copyright on the Internet,” 63 *Ohio St. L. J.* 799, 817–24 (2002); Joel Selvin and Neva Chonin, “Artists Blast Record Companies over Lawsuits Against Downloaders,” *S. F. Chron.*, 11 Sept. 2003, available at <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=c/a/2003/09/11/MN12066.DTL>.

⁶See Peter Lauria, “Infringement! Artists Say They Want Their Music Site Dough,” *N.Y. Post*, 27 Feb. 2008, available at http://www.nypost.com/seven/02272008/business/infringement_99428.htm; Alan McGee, “Recording Contract? Rip-Off You Mean,” *Guardian Music Blog*, 25 Oct. 2007, http://blogs.guardian.co.uk/music/2007/10/alan_mcgee_thurs_pm_pic.html; Neala Johnson, “Q & A with Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails,” *Herald Sun*, 17 May 2007, available at <http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/story/0,21985,21741980-5006024,00.html>.

traditional revenue models, but also calls into question whatever artistic control the author may retain over her work. I will examine both prongs of the pincers, and then will suggest some reasons for optimism for the future.

I. AUTHORS AND COPYRIGHT OWNERSHIP

Copyright vests in a work's creator as soon as she "fixes" it in any tangible medium of expression.⁷ But for many authors, ownership is quickly divested, and for some, it never attaches at all. The latter group of creators are "employees for hire," salaried authors who create works in pursuit of their employment, or freelancers who are commissioned to create certain kinds of works, and who sign a contract specifying that the work will be "for hire."⁸ An author who is not an employee for hire starts out with rights that she may transfer by contract; unlike many continental European laws, the U.S. copyright law places few limitations on the scope of the rights she may transfer.⁹ Moreover, unlike those foreign laws, the U.S. copyright law contains few mandatory remuneration provisions.¹⁰ Thus it is possible for a U.S. author, "for good and valuable consideration" (which could be the mere fact of disseminating the work) to assign "all right, title and interest in and to the work, in all media, now known or later developed, for the full term of copyright, including any renewals and extensions thereof, for the full territory, which shall be the Universe."¹¹ I'm not making this up. The Roz Chast *New Yorker* "Ultimate Contract" cartoon was not so far off in its further specifications: "and even if one day they find a door in the Universe that leads to a whole new non-Universe place, . . . or everything falls into a black hole so nobody knows which end is up and we're all dead anyway so who cares, we'll STILL own all those rights. . . ."¹² Worse, with one exception, this is a valid contract. The exception is not the extra-terrestrial aspect. It concerns the author's inalienable right to

⁷ See 17 U.S.C. § 102(a) (2006).

⁸ Id. at §§ 101, 201(b).

⁹ Compare id. at § 204(a) (grant of exclusive rights must be in writing and signed by grantor) with France, Code of Intellectual Property, arts. L 131-1–L 131-9, L 132-1–L 132-34, available at http://195.83.177.9/upl/pdf/code_35.pdf (detailed provisions concerning contracts, including rules protecting authors against overreaching transfers).

¹⁰ Certain compulsory licenses include mandatory set-asides or percentages for certain classes of creators. See, e.g., 17 U.S.C. § 114(g)(2) ("Proceeds From Licensing of Transmissions").

¹¹ For examples of these kinds of contracts, see Keep Your Copyrights, Clauses about General Assignment of Copyright, <http://keepyourcopyrights.org/contracts/clauses/by-type/10/overreaching> (last visited 19 Oct. 2008).

¹² Roz Chast, "The Ultimate Contract," *The New Yorker*, 11 Aug. 2003, available at http://www.cartoonbank.com/product_details.asp?sitetype=1&sid=67854.

terminate grants of rights thirty-five years after the grant was executed. Thus, even if the contract purports to grant rights in perpetuity and for a lump sum, the author can nonetheless retrieve most of her U.S. rights thirty-five years after the conclusion of the contract.¹³ This is a very important, but otherwise isolated, legislative nod to authors' weak bargaining position.

It's no accident that the copyright law of the U.S. and other common law countries favors easy alienability of authors' rights. Our legal system frowns on "restraints on alienation."¹⁴ Perhaps ironically, the ability freely to part with property is a hallmark of its ownership. That this works to the benefit of the so-called "content industries" could traditionally be justified as consistent with the overall goals of the copyright scheme. These are not only to promote the care and feeding of authors, but also—many would contend, primarily—to ensure the dissemination of works of authorship.¹⁵ After all, the constitutional goal "to promote the progress of science" is not met merely by creating works; someone has to get them from the author's pen (or laptop) into the public's hands. To the extent that authors retard that process by endeavoring to withhold some rights, or make it more expensive by demanding more pay for rights granted, they can seem like pesky interlopers. Australian writer Miles Franklin (best known for her novel *My Brilliant Career*), captured this annoyance in *Bring the Monkey*, her 1932 parody of the English country house murder mystery. The conversation she imagined among members of Britain's budding motion picture industry anticipates what today's motion picture and television producers may have been fantasizing during last year's Writers Guild strike for a decent share of the income from new media "platforms" such as the Internet. Miles Franklin wrote:

[T]hey [the movie moguls] were generally agreed that the total elimination of the author would be a tremendous advance. . . .

"Authors," said this gentleman, "are the bummiest lot of cranks I have ever been up against. Why the heck they aren't content to beat it once they get a price for their stuff, gets my goat." . . .

¹³See 17 U.S.C. § 203.

¹⁴See generally 61 *Am. Jur.* 2d "Perpetuities" § 90 (2002); *Bd. of County Supervisors of Prince William County, Va. v. United States*, 48 F.3d 520 (Fed. Cir. 1995); *Metro. Life Ins. Co. v. Strnad*, 876 P.2d 1362 (Kan. 1994); *Cole v. Peters*, 3 S.W.3d 846 (Mo. Ct. App. W.D. 1999).

¹⁵See, e.g., Peter Jaszi, "Toward a Theory of Copyright: The Metamorphoses of 'Authorship,'" 1991 *Duke L. J.* 455 (1991); Pamela Samuelson, "Fair Use for Computer Programs and Other Copyrightable Works in Digital Form: The Implications of *Sony*, *Galoob*, and *Sega*," 1 *J. Intell. Prop. L.* 49, 57 (1993); R. Anthony Reese, "A Map of the Frontiers of Copyright," 85 *Tex. L. Rev.* 1979, 1982–84 (2007); Jessica Litman, "Sharing & Stealing," 27 *Hastings Comm. & Ent. L. J.* 1 (2004).

There was ready agreement that authors were a wanton tax on any industry, whether publishing, drama or pictures. . . .

"That is why I want you to see my film—one reason," [the film producer said suavely]. "It has been assembled by experts in the industry, not by some wayward outsider. . . . [We have replaced the author with] continuity expert[s] and producer[s]." ¹⁶

A copyright law for "continuity experts" (also known as reality television coordinators) or, as the French might more pithily put it, "le droit d'auteur sans auteur," that is a vision to spur illegal downloading as civil disobedience: let's strike a blow for authors by stealing from the corporations that fleece them.

2. TECHNO-POSTMODERNISM—FOUCAULT MEETS THE WEB

We can further sweeten self-serving on the Web when we realize that not only has the author already been divested, she has in fact long been dead. The "death of the author" announced in literary theory has produced a syllogism in copyright rhetoric: Copyright is a consequence of the romantic conception of authorship; romantic authorship is dead; therefore, copyright is (or should be) dead, too.¹⁷ In postmodernism, authors are tyrants, imposing their meanings on texts: Michel Foucault pronounced that "the author does not precede the work; he is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recombination of fiction."¹⁸

If the author is dead, or must be dethroned, then the reader not only lives, but reigns supreme. Readers give meaning to the texts they peruse; reading itself becomes a creative act. The Internet gives concrete effect to the postmodernist theory of the reader as creator, for all readers can remanipulate the text, and none can impose unilateral significance. Reception becomes regeneration; as Jessica Litman has emphasized, the reader is no longer a "sponge" passively ingurgitating other people's creativity.¹⁹ Or, to belabor the aqueous metaphor, the reader no

¹⁶ Miles Franklin, *Bring the Monkey*, 38–40, 74 (1984).

¹⁷ For exculpation of the "romantic author," see Lionel Bently, "R. v. The Author: From Death Penalty to Community Service," 32 *Colum. J. L. & Arts* 1 (Fall 2008).

¹⁸ David Lange, "At Play in the Fields of the Word: Copyright and the Construction of Authorship in the Post-Literate Millennium," 55 *Law & Contemp. Probs.* 139, 143 (1992), citing Michel Foucault, *What Is an Author?* (Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, trans.), in Robert C. Davis and Ronald Schleifer, *Contemporary Literary Criticism: Literary and Cultural Studies*, 274 (Longman, 1989).

¹⁹ Cf. Jessica Litman, "Lawful Personal Use," 85 *Tex. L. Rev.* 1871, 1908 (2007) (noting that the difference between exploitation and enjoyment of works has become more difficult to distinguish).

longer merely draws from the well of others' authorship; she casts the contents of her bucket into the constantly changing stream of reader-modified creations.

In this techno-postmodernist view, "The" author may be dead because individual creativity is discredited; as Peter Jaszi predicted in the Paleolithic early 1990s, authorship is becoming "polyvocal . . . increasingly collective . . . and collaborative."²⁰ With the increasing Wikipedification of content, the "wisdom of crowds"²¹ overtakes individual expertise in the production of works that everyone can pitch in to create, add to, or modify. In the context of copyright, if creativity is so dispersed, then no one can claim to have originated a work of authorship, so perhaps no one can fairly own a copyright, either. Moreover, if the rationale for copyright is incentive to produce and distribute works, the Internet may have topped up our supply of Johnsonian "blockheads."²² In addition to the poets who burn with inner fire, for whom creation is allegedly its own reward, and others (such as law professors) for whom other gainful employment permits authorial altruism, we now have Internet exhibitionists (call them bloggers) and "crowd-sources," masses of incremental contributors whose participation, whether occasional or obsessive, belies the Johnsonian calculus. These creators, even if individually identifiable, may not need the carrot of exclusive rights in order to produce works of authorship. Copyright, then, is not only a wasteful windfall; it somehow degrades the noble calling of disinterested creativity.

That the author, if still living (metaphorically and actually), should not look to her writings for material sustenance, is not a new idea. In the eighteenth-century "battle of the booksellers," Lord Camden belittled writing for profit: "Glory is the reward of science, and those who deserve it, scorn all meaner views. . . . It was not for gain, that Bacon, Newton, Milton, Locke, instructed and delighted the world; it would be unworthy such men to traffic with a dirty bookseller for so much a sheet of letter press."²³

²⁰Peter Jaszi, "On the Author Effect: Contemporary Copyright and Collective Creativity," 10 *Cardozo Arts & Ent. L. J.* 293, 302 (1992).

²¹James Surowiecki, *The Wisdom of Crowds* (2004).

²²See Tom W. Bell, "The Specter of Copyism v. Blockheaded Authors: How User-Generated Content Affects Copyright Policy," 10 *Vand. J. Ent. & Tech. L.* 841, 852–54 (2008) (explaining that technology advances have decreased the cost of producing and distributing expressive works, resulting in more blockhead authors).

²³17 Cobbett, *Parl. Hist. Eng.*, col. 1000 (1813). Lord Camden's rhetoric evokes that of Boileau, almost a century earlier, deploring those who "disgusted with glory and famished for gain/indenture their muse to a bookseller/and convert a divine art into a mercenary trade." See Nicolas Boileau Despréaux, *L'Art Poétique*, 33 (D. Nichol Smith, ed., 1931):

Given the rise of the professional author in the eighteenth century, this outburst was retrograde even its day.²⁴ As Catherine Macaulay then wryly observed, the unpaid bills of the “sordid butchers and bakers . . . are evils which the sublime flights of poetic fancy do not always soar above.”²⁵

Regarding authorship in the digital era, I believe that the reports of the death of the professional author have been greatly exaggerated. I doubt neither that the Web vastly enlarges the numbers of people who commit acts of authorship, nor that digital media promote new kinds of authorship, from wikis to mashups to fanzines to kinetic graphics to blogs and beyond. Professional authorship will nonetheless persist, I believe, whether because we still value individual genius (or at least expertise), and/or because not all readers will want to be participatory all the time. Recombinant and instant authorship may or may not be passing fancies; those whom I will dare to call “real” authors will still be with us. Moreover, they will be joined by a host of newcomers, for example, as bloggers become novelists or write book-length nonfiction, or simply persist in their online endeavors. At least, real authors will remain as long as the writing and other creative trades furnish adequate remuneration. As my former colleague Jeremy Waldron put it, the author may be dead, but she still responds to economic incentives. The question for the future of copyright, and for the author's place in it, is how to make those incentives meaningful for creators.

3. MAKING COPYRIGHT WORK FOR AUTHORS

Some of the same factors that today cause copyright to be derided may also come to the aid of individual authors. The technology that brings works directly to users' computers and personal portable devices no

Je sais qu'un noble esprit peut, sans honte et sans crime,
Tirer de son travail un tribut légitime;
Mais je ne puis souffrir ces auteurs renommés,
Qui, dégoûtés de gloire et d'argent affamés,
Mettent leur Apollon aux gages d'un libraire,
Et font d'un art divin un métier mercenaire.

²⁴On “the development of authorship as a business” in the eighteenth century, see, e.g., 1 Victor Bonham-Carter, *Authors by Profession*, 11–32 (1978); Brean S. Hammond, *Professional Imaginative Writing in England, 1670–1740: “Hackney for Bread”* (1997); A. S. Collins, *Authorship in the Days of Johnson* (1927).

Moreover, Lord Camden may have misplaced his faith in John Locke's authorial disinterestedness. Locke collaborated on the text of a bill licensing the Stationers Company, which did not pass, but which would have vested both initial printing and reprinting rights in the author. Locke's draft, written in March 1695, appears to accept the premise of authorial proprietary rights: the text provides that the prohibition on printing was “to secure the Authors property in his copy.” See draft written by John Locke in 5 *The Correspondence of John Locke*, 795 (E. S. De Beer, ed., 1979). See generally Laura Moscati, “Un ‘Memorandum’ di John Locke tra Censorship e Copyright,” 76 *Rivista di storia del Diritto Italiano* 69 (2003).

²⁵Catherine Macaulay, *A Modest Plea for the Property of Copyright*, 15 (Bath 1774).

longer requires traditional publishing's infrastructure of intermediaries. Maybe every reader is not truly an author, but every author can be a publisher. At least, every computer-equipped author can make her work directly available to her audience via the Internet. But availing oneself of the means of distribution is one thing, making a *living* from the works one distributes is another,²⁶ particularly when the media that empower authors also empower users to acquire and disseminate works for free.

To an increasing extent, every author can employ electronic copyright management, and/or copyright management collectives to set the financial and other terms and conditions for access to and copying of her work. Or, more rudimentarily, she can make the work available without technological restraints, and appeal to user generosity,²⁷ though, as Radiohead and Stephen King discovered, passing the hat may prove a precarious strategy.²⁸ There is much debate over whether technological protection measures (also referred to as DRM—digital rights management) are worth the candle, given their unpopularity and the relative ease with which consumers can elude them.²⁹ (Even though the eluding,

²⁶See, e.g., Brian Stelter, "For Web TV, a Handful of Hits but No Formula for Success," *N.Y. Times*, 31 Aug. 2008, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/01/business/media/01webisodes.html?emc=eta1> (Striking Hollywood writers created independent "webisodes." "The strategy seemed simple: make money by going straight to the Internet. Months later, they are realizing that producing Web content may be easy but profiting from it is hard.")

²⁷See Mathew Ingram, "Radiohead Proves Fans Will Pay for Downloads," *Globe & Mail* (Toronto), 16 Oct. 2007, at R1; Joan Anderman, "Radiohead's Revenge Is Sweet," *Bost. Globe*, 11 Oct. 2007, available at http://www.boston.com/ae/music/cd_reviews/articles/2007/10/11/radioheads_revenge_is_sweet/; Mike Osegueda, "Radiohead Makes a Case for Free Music Distribution," *Fresno Bee*, 5 Oct. 2007, § 7, at 2.

²⁸Radiohead's appeal to fan generosity turned out, however, to be so disappointing that the band forswore future offers of that kind. See Mimi Turner, "Radiohead Plays Price Tag: Band Won't Let Fans Pay What They Want Again," *Hollywood Rep.*, 30 Apr. 2008, at 5 (speculating that many fans downloaded album without paying anything). Eight years earlier, Stephen King fared no better; see Bob Minzesheimer, "Healthier King Returns to Roots as He Branches Out," *USA Today*, 2 Oct. 2000, at 11D (declining rate of payment for downloads of self-published serial novel *The Plant*).

²⁹See, e.g., June M. Besek, "Anti-Circumvention Laws and Copyright: A Report From the Kernochan Center for Law, Media and the Arts," 27 *Colum. J. L. & Arts* 385, 400–07 (2004) (DRM on the whole makes more works more available at more price points); Jane C. Ginsburg, "The Pros and Cons of Strengthening Intellectual Property Protection: Technological Protection Measures and Section 1201 of the U.S. Copyright Act," 16 *Info. & Comm. Tech. L.* 191 (2007); but see Lawrence Lessig, "Jail Time in the Digital Age," *N.Y. Times*, 30 July 2001, available at <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9806E0D9123DF933A05754C0A9679C8B63&sec=&spn=>; see also Anick Jesdanun, "Digital-Use Copyright Act Called Too Broad," *Seattle Times*, 21 Dec. 2002, available at <http://community.seattletimes.nwsourc.com/archive/?date=20021221&slug=digirights21>; Dan Gillmor, "Hacking, Hijacking Our Rights," *San Jose Mercury News*, 28 July 2002, at 1F; Steve Jobs, "Thoughts on Music," 6 Feb. 2007, <http://www.apple.com/hotnews/thoughtsonmusic/>; Declan McCullagh, "Tech Activists Protest Anti-Copying," *CNet News*, 17 July 2002, <http://www.news.com/2100-1023-944668.html>; James Gibson, "Once and Future Copyright," 81 *Notre Dame L. Rev.* 167 (2005); Alfred C. Yen, "What Federal Gun Control Can Teach Us About the DMCA's Anti-Trafficking Provisions," 2003 *Wis. L. Rev.* 649 (2003).

or aiding the eluding by distributing descramblers, is illegal.) In fact, some technological measures are more obnoxious than others. Many people deplore copy controls on downloads, ironically including Steve Jobs, whose iPod has been the most noteworthy and successful utilizer of download control technology.³⁰ By contrast, most people seem not to notice, much less denounce, the technology that controls streaming media. For example, the Rhapsody subscription that lets you listen to unlimited quantities of music but doesn't let you create retention copies; or the YouTube video clips that you can watch in more or less real time, but not download to keep.

As a practical matter, the future of copyright for professional authors is likely to depend on the development of consumer-friendly payment and protection mechanisms. Free distribution can, of course, enhance the author's fame, but if the author cannot capitalize on her fame by exploiting her copyrights, then she will not have made much progress. (A starving artist's garret is still a garret, even if the address is well known.) I am not sanguine about the non-copyright alternatives, most of which involve giving the copyrighted work away as a loss leader to get consumers to spend money on something else whose supply the author can control. This is sometimes called the "Grateful Dead model": I sell my song for a song, but make you pay real money for the t-shirts that allow you to express your affection for my band.³¹ This assumes, counter-factually, that the demand for bundled goods or services is infinitely expandable and, even more counter-factually, that it is applicable to all kinds of works of authorship. For example, the public may be willing to purchase some successful performers' "allegiance goods," but who ever heard of the *songwriter* whose works the singer performs, much less would be interested in paying to blazon her name across his chest? Or, "bundling" *services* with intellectual content may work well for software, for which "helplines" can be an essential adjunct, but I see less prospect for a *service après vente* for a photograph.

Copyright is not just about getting paid; it is also about maintaining control, both economic and artistic, over the fate of the work. If J. K. Rowling chooses to end the Harry Potter series with *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, her copyright entitles her to keep Harry from matriculating at medical school or, for that matter, turning into an axe murderer. Unless J. K. Rowling changes her mind, there will not be an

³⁰ See Jobs, *supra* note 29 (arguing in favor of abolishing copy controls).

³¹ For a speculation about how to make money if digital copying cannot be prevented, including an evocation of "Deadhead economics," see Kevin Kelly, "Better Than Free," *The Technium*, 31 Jan. 2008, http://www.kk.org/thetechnium/archives/2008/01/better_than_fre.php.

eighth Harry Potter novel. On the other hand, Rowling is unlikely to succeed (if she even tries) in shutting down the innumerable Web sites in which techno-postmodernist fans (or detractors) are sharing their variously guileless or perverse versions of the series. (For example, the “harrypotterfanfiction.com” site alone claims more than 58,000 unofficial Harry Potter stories.) Rowling’s copyright will cut off the commercial prospects of those stories,³² but the commercial-noncommercial distinction may be increasingly elusive on the Web. I am not sure what would be the desirable (or feasible) response to this kind of public appropriation of works of authorship. Some years ago, an Internet guru made this pronouncement: “You have no privacy [on the Net]: Get over it!”³³ Will authors just have to “get over” their apparent inability to maintain the integrity of their creations?

Recent developments suggest that the Web may not create an ineluctably hostile environment for authors’ reputational interests in their works. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit upheld the enforceability of the “artistic license” provisions of an online open source free software licensing agreement that obliged users of the software to give name credit to the licensing creator and to mark off any modifications the licensees may make to the program.³⁴ I infer that one reason for requiring that the person who modifies the software own up to her alterations is to protect the original author from being tarred with the brush of the second author’s potentially ill-conceived or badly executed changes to the underlying program. The agreement does not seek to prevent alterations, but merely to ensure that the original creator is not associated with them.

The world of open source licensing may not, however, offer an appealing template to authors of other kinds of works. For one thing, other authors may not want their works to become a continuous collaborative project. They may prefer not only to have credit for their creations, but also to preserve their works as they created them. Or at least to extract a price for forgoing pristine conservation. It may be cynical to suggest that one can bear having one’s artistic vision mangled, so long as the mangling occurs all the way to the bank. To the extent the observation is true, it brings us back to payment. One way to make money is by selling copies of or access to works of authorship, if possible

³² See *Warner Bros. v. RDR Books*, 575 F. Supp. 2d 513 (S.D.N.Y. 2008) (enjoining commercial publication of book version of “The Harry Potter Lexicon”; Rowling’s copyright does not prevent third parties from writing *about* the Harry Potter series, but defendant’s commentaries copied too much from Rowling’s works to qualify as a fair use).

³³ See “On the Record: Scott McNealy,” *S. F. Chron.*, 14 Sept. 2003, available at <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2003/09/14/BU141353.DTL>.

³⁴ *Jacobsen v. Katzer*, 535 F.3d 1373 (Fed. Cir. 2008).

notwithstanding the availability of unauthorized means of copying, such as unlicensed peer-to-peer file-sharing. Another way is advertising, and the big copyright battles of the moment, notably Viacom's suit against Google–YouTube, are really about who gets what cut of the advertising revenue. But the advertising revenue can also go to authors, assuming that they retain the relevant copyright interests. Those Harry Potter fan sites carry a lot of ads, including those placed by Google. I don't know whether J. K. Rowling licenses the sites and participates in the advertising revenue, but if she wanted a share, she probably would have a good claim against the Web sites, and maybe even against Google (though that's a longer shot).

Will authors retain the relevant copyright interests to benefit from authorized Internet exploitations? Those who self-publish will, but publishers can still add value, particularly in credibility and publicity, so many authors will still want intermediary distributors. Perhaps less celebrated authors would be better off abandoning any pretense to copyright ownership and urging Congress instead to impose more compulsory licenses with mandatory percentages of royalty distribution to the works' creators. That is, however, a desperate solution, which authors could come to regret if technology and business models develop in such a way that resistance to unreasonable publisher demands is not in fact futile.

In that spirit, I'd like to invite readers to take a tour of a Web site, www.keepyourcopyrights.org, which the Kernochan Center for Law, Media and the Arts, and the Center for Law and Technology at Columbia Law School have launched in the hope of bringing some power back to the people who create works of authorship. The Web site's credo is "a creator forewarned is a creator forearmed." As the Web site explains, "Today, too many creators take a passive attitude toward their copyrights. The matter seems complex, and publishers or distributors may tell you that everyone does it their way, or that giving up copyrights is standard practice. But giving up your rights under copyright is a decision, not a default option. If you stand passively by, you may over the course of a long creative career produce a large body of work, most of which is owned and controlled by other people, whose interests and yours may diverge."³⁵

The site offers basic information about copyright (with links to more information), and a catalogue of contracts whose rights-granting clauses the site explains in plain English. The site also rates the contracts on a scale of "author-friendly" (signaled with a green thumbs up),

³⁵ Keep Your Copyrights, About This Site, <http://www.keepyourcopyrights.org/about> (last visited 7 Feb. 2009).

“could be worse” (signaled with a yellow thumb in equipoise), “author unfriendly” (indicated by an orange thumbs down), and “incredibly overreaching” (designated by a big red claw). The contracts are categorized by type of grant and type of creator. The site includes the full contracts, in order to place the granting language in context. There is also a “before and after” section showing the contract language originally proposed, and the final version, after the author pushed back. It is important to recognize that many publishers and other co-contractant exploiters rely on authors’ ignorance or on intimidation; but if an informed author requests changes, more often than not the changes will be accepted.

For example, one national magazine proposed the following contract:

You agree to grant to MAGAZINE all rights in the Works including, but not limited to, all rights, title and interest throughout the world, and the right to procure copyrights in the United States of America and throughout the world, it being agreed that these are works made for hire as that term is defined by the Copyright Act effective January 1, 1976.³⁶

The author responded with alternate language, to which the magazine agreed:

You agree to grant to MAGAZINE a non-exclusive license to the Work to exercise any and all of the rights granted by the Copyright Act of the United States and the copyright laws of other countries, not limited to the right to reproduce, display, distribute, sell, and translate the Work throughout the world, in any media now known or later developed.³⁷

The magazine still obtains very broad use rights in the work, but the author keeps her copyright (no work for hire, and no grant of “all right, title and interest”), and therefore can allow others to exploit the article (or exploit it herself).

Finally, the site includes a section offering some very pragmatic suggestions about royalty statements. For example:

If you are a professional creator, the provisions in your contract that go to how much you get paid may be the ones you care about most. If you have succeeded in negotiating changes in your contract that will produce more income for you—for example, you increased the percentage of royalties, or you decreased the amount set aside for “reserves

³⁶Keep Your Copyrights, Magazine Agreement, <http://www.KeepYourCopyrights.org/contracts/before-and-after/magazine> (last visited 7 Feb. 2009).

³⁷Id.

for returns”—make sure the changes in the contract are reflected in the royalty statement! If the first version of the contract you were shown was a “standard form,” chances are the royalty statement form is standard, too, and therefore tracks the first version of the contract. *If the royalty statement isn't modified to incorporate the changes made to the contract, then what you actually get paid may not correspond to the terms you negotiated.*³⁸

The catalogue of contracts on Keepyourcopyrights.org is ever-growing. The site solicits and receives contracts from visitors to the site. Unless the contract has already been publicly disclosed, the names of the parties are removed. The site cannot offer legal advice, but any contracts received are analyzed, paraphrased in plain English, and rated. We hope in this way to help creators retain and better benefit from their copyrights. Moreover, by helping to make copyright work for creators, we hope to assist the “progress of knowledge” to which U.S. copyright aspires.

³⁸Keep Your Copyrights, About Royalty Statements, <http://www.keepyourcopyrights.org/contracts/royalty-statements> (last visited 7 Feb. 2009) (emphasis in original).