



# Culture vs. Copyright

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## **Culture vs. Copyright** Anatoly Volynets

A musing on the philosophy of copyright and the nature of culture, presented mainly as a dialogue among students.

In this philosophical book, the author's debut, a fictional dialogue blends with essay-style authorial comment to develop the theory of so-called Authoright, a copyright alternative that requires full attribution of a work's original creator but allows for unlimited reproduction and derivative works. The author acknowledges the book's ambiguous genre in his introduction: "[I]t is neither a strictly scientific investigation nor a purely fictional, political or autobiographical work." The dialogue is a conversation between a teacher and five first-grade students, identified as Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Kappa and Delta, who argue about the creative process, the relationship between culture and civilization, appropriate forms of compensation and the nature of art. Periodically, the text returns to standard prose format for a longer essay or a summary on the same topics, written in the author's voice. Volynets evaluates three different systems for recognizing and compensating cultural productions, concluding that copyright is a destructive monopoly, whereas Authoright is the most effective way of compensating authors while removing limits on creativity—a conclusion reinforced by the fact that the book displays an Authoright, not a copyright, in its frontmatter. Volynets' book requires readers to be open to thought experiments and theoretical discussions, though these are, for the most part, easy to follow. However, readers may wonder why a dialogue among first-graders is full of comments such as "There are riveting and telling pictures out there, and there are many that are good for the trash can only. How is this possible?" Readers accustomed to the current publishing industry are unlikely to agree with Volynets' expectation that authors will somehow increase their earnings by selling to multiple publishers under the Authoright system. Likewise, they might not consider the current setup to be a "toxic copyright-driven environment." Nevertheless, Volynets presents an engaging discussion of a timely topic.

A detailed, if somewhat idealistic, exploration of art, culture and copyright in the marketplace.

## **Culture vs. Copyright Details**

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Author : Anatoly Volynets

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# From Reader Review Culture vs. Copyright for online ebook

## Daniel says

This review originally published in Looking For a Good Book. Rated 0.5 out of 5.0

Author Anatoly Volynets waxes on his thoughts on a preferred means of 'protection' for works of art, claiming that copyright hinders art (which in turn hinders the advancement of culture) and serves only large corporations that can publish (or deny the publishing of) the art.

There are so many things wrong with this book that it is difficult to know where to begin.

I'll start with the fact that I am immediately distrustful and wary of any work that is propagandist writing, which I believe this to be. So what, exactly makes some non-fiction simply persuasive writing and some propaganda? I'll get to that in a bit.

Secondly, Volynets couches some of his ideas behind the expressions of first graders. Clever, since we know that 'out of the mouths of babes' can come some wonderful insight. But is Volynets really suggested that the 'protection' of art should be through the means and methods suggested by first graders? First graders who have such a wonderful grasp of supply and demand and the need for artists to pay their rent? (I write that with sarcasm...please read it the same way.) And just who are these first graders who speak like this (note: the first graders are identified as 'Alpha' 'Beta' 'Gamma' 'Kappa' and 'Delta') :

Alpha: All right. But he won't pay much because any advantage expires at the moment that the work gets out!

Beta: Hey, Alpha, if you understand business so well, why don't you use your imagination a bit more?

Alpha: I take that as an insult.

Kappa: Cool down, guys.

Delta: Hey, hey, I get it! The publisher may pay the artist very well so that he keeps the work inside!

Alpha: So what? It gets outside when it gets published anyway!

Delta: So what yourself! The first is the first! Customers value that! This is how a brand develops! It pays, all right.

Anybody out there know any first graders? Do they really speak like this? Talk about 'brands' like this? Personally, I think they are probably reading the Berenstain Bears, and playing four square, and not talking about business and art as if they were miniature Aristotles.

And then there's the subject matter. Voynets is dead sure that copyright is wrong and "authoright" is the only true future that will protect the artist, enhance culture, and still make money for big business. Pie-in-the-sky dreaming is fine, but he pretty much bases all his arguments on one or two theories, writes about them as if they are fact, which sounds good at first, but if you actually stop to think about them, or actually look at his reasoning, it all falls apart.

In 'authoright' mode, a writer (we'll use writer, though Volynets claims that this would be true for any artist, musician, dancer, etc) can sell his work as many times as he wants. In fact, once it appears publicly, it is then

available for anyone to use, providing they credit authorship. This will create exposure to the artist and actually prohibit theft, according to Volynets because it will already be 'out there' with the author's name on it. This is a fairly simplistic explanation of Volynets' theory, but I believe I have it in a nutshell. And, just as his first graders suggest, the big publishing companies will spend good money on it, making the author a handsome sum because the publishing houses will want to create a brand by being able to announce that they are the *first* to publish a specific author. We writes, flat-out: "Publishers will compete for the ability to get the next one first." (Page 97 of my copy.) And while this is written as though Volynets knows this to be a fact, no where does he indicate what research or conversations he's had with publishers to come to this conclusion.

Does anyone else see any problems with this? Does anyone else foresee that the giant publishing houses...those who can afford to mass produce on a cheaper scale, will wait for something to suddenly be 'out there' and print it cheaply so that they can sell it for less but sell many more of them, thus making a lot of money for themselves, laughing at the schmucks who shelled out good money just to be 'first'? Can you say "Wal-mart"?

It's actually pretty easy to punch holes in Volynets' arguments, but that's not the purpose of this review. Let me address the writing style....

I referred to this as propagandist writing. To me, the difference between writing an essay or a philosophic musing, and writing propaganda, is the way in which the ideas are couched. At one point it is pointed out that the authorright format that is being discussed takes place in an ideal world, and truly everything written about the authorright format is written in the best light and everything that Volynets associated with copyright, he chooses the worst possible outcomes for his examples. Even the language that is used is extremely contradictory, with anything referring to copyright written in harsh, negative language, while everything written about authorright is written in a positive way. For instance, Volynets sums up copyright with these sentences:

A toxic copyright-driven environment pressures a creator to give to the tastes of publishers. ...  
In this monopoly-based environment, any work of art may disappear unnoticed, regardless of how brilliant it is. High prices suppress the book ...

"Toxic." "Pressures." "Monopoly." "Disappear." All words that immediately put the reader in a negative frame of mind. On the other hand, when summing up authorright:

The author will be paid a certain amount of money. If the sum is considerable, there is a happy ending. ... If the publisher wants exclusivity (until the work is published) he may pay more. ... Does second-hand publishing provide any incentive to the author? It can. For example, if a publisher wants to develop a brand, he may pay the author to be the author's announced sponsor. Will just any publisher do this? Some will, for this marketing idea is not worse than any other.

"Paid." "Money." "Sum is considerable." "Pay more." "It can." "He may." "Some will." Positive impressions even though they are based on suppositions and the fact that the idea "isn't any worse than any other" (perhaps my favorite reasoning in the book, which is still good for a chuckle).

The point here is that the ideas aren't really strong enough to stand on their own (and the number of ideas that support the basic tenet are quite limited and we keep coming back to 'brand' and the fact that the author

can sell his works multiple times because publishers will want to publish works multiple times) and so Volynets tries to sway the reader with the writing, using positive reinforcements for his ideas and negative reinforcement for the established methods.

Fortunately, many people can see through this.

But of course Volynets has set himself up by establishing early that if you disagree with his reasoning it is not because of any fault on his part but because the readers are 'accustomed to the current publishing industry' and 'unlikely to agree with Volynets' expectation that authors will somehow increase their earnings' because they lack an open mind (see the book description on Goodreads). I did go in to this with a completely open mind, but it struck me early that the author was the one without an open mind by not comparing the perfect world authorright with the perfect world copyright, or truly addressing the negatives of authorright (the one time he brings up the idea of theft because of authorright, he quickly sweeps it under the rug with "this does not change the situation much...").

Looking for a good book? Keep looking.

I received an electronic copy of this book from the publisher, through Edelweiss, in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Ian yarrington says**

I won this in the giveaways and I probably wouldn't have thought about reading otherwise. Not that it wasn't good, because I found it to well written and informative, it just wasn't a topic I thought I needed to be schooled about. With that said, it sure did school me, I learned a ton of little things that I just never really thought of. I understand the idea behind setting some of it in a conversation format but I feel like this dense of a topic could easily just be done normally.

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### **Miriam Smith says**

Won in the Goodreads Giveaways

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### **Amy Vey says**

The author makes some interesting points in Culture vs. Copyright. Enjoyed the different view points. This book definitely is one made for a good discussion with others! And there's nothing better than a good discussion!! Thank you for allowing me to review your book.

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### **Julian says**

Review pendiente.

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## **Anatoly Volynets says**

This is my book. Well, it is known phenomenon that reading your own book never satisfies. Maybe. I can see some improvements possible. But the book is good. To this day I am amazed how I managed to pack it with so many ideas. And they all are clear. One may argue an author's idea is clear to one, inevitably. This is not so. Specifically when it comes to science, philosophy. That was not once when I read my own articles and had hard time to specifically determine what exactly was meant here or there. This is not the case with "Culture vs. Copyright." It was planed to be clear and done as clear as it can only be. Check it out.

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## **Glenda Bixler says**

An Excellent basis for Discussions on Future of Publishing...

<http://gabixlerreviews-bookreadershea...>

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## **Elaine Olshanetsky says**

I am glad I read Culture vs. Copyright. Even though I can't entirely say I agree with the writer (I don't necessarily disagree either, I just have not done enough thinking on the subject), I think this is an excellent conversation to have, and an excellent way to start it.

To cast doubt on a practice that seems to be universally accepted and taken for granted is not a small win. And that's exactly what the writer does. The book is deep, beautiful in its intricate thoughts, but at the same time not pretentious or hard to follow.

Volynets leads us to his ultimate argument that copyright is detrimental or even antithetical to culture. To get there, we examine the nature of art. He says a work of art equals a new world, a layer of humanity. The notion of art as a new world is dear to my heart, so I enjoyed this discussion in particular.

If Volynets' style is dogmatic or closed minded, as some reviewers argued, I don't mind. To beat your head against an accepted practice in an attempt to expose its shortcomings, subtlety would not suffice, so I overlook Volynets' stubbornness in argument and passion, and do not hold it against him.

The ultimate triumph of C vs. C is that after reading it, the ubiquitous copyright sign on the second page of the novel I am reading all of a sudden didn't make any sense. Who is this that it's next to? And what exactly do they own and why? For the time being, this seems absurd to me.

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## **Wanda C says**

This book offers insight to a perspective of authorship, copyright, and more, and the impact all have on our

economy and our culture. The author presents concepts using a dialog among other people (first graders and their teacher) followed up by his take away from the conversations. One does not have to support or disagree with the opinions/perspective of the author because the ideas he offers opens the reader's mind to additional insights, possibilities, or a new way of promoting or defending one's own beliefs. I appreciate the ability to be able to read about points of view I agree with, never thought of, or disagree with. It was an entertaining and educational read. I have added more (what if, how do I avoid, what options are available to promote others/community without undermining myself or my art) to my project list for times when I interact with others regarding my concept to creation projects.

Based on a five-star rating, I give it five stars!

- 1) Buy from the author in the future? Yes
  - 2) Did it keep me intrigued? Yes
  - 3) Story line adventurous, mysterious, and believable? Yes
  - 4) Would I recommend to a family member/friend? Yes.
  - 5) Did my idea of the book based on the cover remain the same after I read the book? Yes. The typewriter is symbolic of creativity. The handcuffs symbolize the restrictions and protections of creations and those who create and those who wish to use the creations.
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