

COPYRIGHT, AURA AND CONTROL

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ABSTRACT

Unlicensed reproduction of media is frequently condemned as unethical, illicit, or even criminal. However, this perspective could overlook the broader economic and ideological structures that shape access to culture and knowledge. Copyright laws, largely driven by corporate interests, create monopolistic systems that prioritize profit over accessibility, reinforcing systemic inequalities by restricting cultural participation to those with lesser financial means. This thesis examines how digital piracy, and the circulation of unlicensed media challenge these structures of ownership, highlighting the connections of intellectual property law and media accessibility.

By researching piracy within broader discussions of authorship, originality, and access, this thesis examines how digital media landscapes ⁽¹⁾ both reinforce and resist capitalist control. It critically analyses piracy not simply as an act of theft, but a form of resistance against the dominant economic models and offers alternative approaches of media distribution. Through this lens, this thesis investigates the power dynamics embedded in contemporary intellectual property regimes, ultimately questioning who has the right to own, distribute, and engage with media in the digital age.

(1) The media landscape, or the digital landscape, refers to the online environment in which people communicate and obtain information, news, and entertainment. The media landscape refers to newspapers, books, radio, podcasts, television, social media platforms, and more. (media landscape - News Literacy Initiative, no date)

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Unauthorized reproduction and distribution of media are often viewed as unethical or even criminal. In 2023, piracy websites saw about 229.4 billion visits, a 6.7% increase from the previous year (Muso, 2024), showing the scale of illegal media consumption despite legal efforts to prevent it. The dominant view treats piracy as a threat to creativity and innovation, supporting strict intellectual property laws. However, this perspective overlooks a deeper issue about ownership, access, and control. Current copyright systems favor corporate interests, limit access to cultural works, and reinforce economic inequality.

The rise of digital piracy challenges these restrictive systems. By bypassing traditional gatekeepers, piracy questions ideas of authorship, originality, and legitimacy. This research aims to rethink these ideas and challenge the conventional view of piracy. Scholars like Lawrence Lessig (2001) and Kembrew McLeod (2005) have criticized the expansion of intellectual property laws, focusing on how they enable corporate monopolies. This thesis builds on their work, showing how piracy can resist corporate control over cultural production. It also draws on Walter Benjamin (1936) and John Berger (1972), who examined how reproduction technologies shift art from being an elite possession to something accessible to the masses, offering new insights into the cultural value of pirated media.

Ultimately, this thesis questions who has the right to own, share, and engage with media. It advocates for a system that balances creators' rights with public access to culture and knowledge, challenging dominant views on piracy and calling for intellectual property laws that promote equity, inclusion, and broader cultural participation.

Intellectual property (IP) laws are meant to regulate who owns, uses, and distributes creative works, ensuring that creators can benefit financially from their ideas. In reality, these laws primarily serve the interests of large corporations rather than the artists and innovators they claim to protect.

Shaped by capitalist ideologies, IP laws overwhelmingly favour privileged corporations while systematically excluding underprivileged creators. Instead of encouraging creativity and innovation, IP laws function as mechanisms for profit-making, reinforcing economic inequality by restricting access to culture and knowledge. Far from being a fair system, these laws enable corporate monopolies to hoard intellectual property, often restricting rather than encouraging artistic progress.

The scale of this injustice is undeniable. For instance, artists like Kate Nash have spoken out about how the traditional music industry fails to support independent musicians, forcing them to seek alternative income streams like OnlyFans ⁽²⁾ to fund their tours (Rolling Stone, 2024). Meanwhile, major record labels and streaming platforms continue to profit immensely while paying artists fractions of a cent per stream, with Spotify compensating between \$0.003 and \$0.005 per play (Ditto, 2025). IP laws do not just protect creators, they also function as tools for profit-making, reinforcing economic inequality by restricting access to culture and knowledge.

A core principle of IP law is exclusivity; the idea that only the creator, or the company that owns the rights, can control how a work is used. While this system is intended to protect creators, it also restricts how people can engage with cultural works. Fan creations such as remixes, fan fiction, and derivative art are often removed from online platforms due to copyright claims. Large corporations aggressively enforce these laws to maintain control over cultural production, limiting how audiences can interact with and reinterpret creative works.

This consolidation of control also leads to monopolistic practices, where a small number of companies dominate entire industries. As Lawrence Lessig argues in *The Future of Ideas* (2001), modern

(2) OnlyFans is an online platform and app created in 2016. With it, people can pay for content (photos, videos and live streams) via a monthly membership. Content is mainly created by YouTubers, fitness trainers, models, content creators and public figures in order to monetise their profession. It is also popular with adult content creators (Internet Matters Ltd, 2025).

copyright laws have shifted from protecting creators to serving corporate interests, ultimately restricting public engagement with culture. Lessig notes, “After two centuries of copyright statutes, the scope of copyright has exploded, and the reach of copyright is now universal” (2001, p. 106). Lessig suggests that this change, has resulted in a world where “any act of ‘copying’ is presumptively regulated by the statute; any derivative use is within the reach of this regulation” (2001, p. 107). Lessig contrasts this with an earlier time, explaining that between 1790 and 1799, “the vast majority of creative work was free for others to use; and the work that was protected was protected only for limited purposes” (2001, p. 106). Meaning that while copyright used to protect creative works with loose restrictions, it has now expanded to regulate nearly all forms of copying and derivative use, creating universal control over creativity.

In this environment, the freedom to engage with cultural works as audiences or creators is severely restricted. Lessig’s reflections on the evolution of copyright law explain how we have shifted from a system where “a tiny part of creative content was controlled” to one where “most of the most useful and valuable creative content is controlled for every significant use” (2001, p.107).

Similarly, in *Freedom of Expression*[®] (2005) Kembrew McLeod argues that strict copyright enforcement often suppresses creativity rather than fostering it. He references Thomas Jefferson’s⁽³⁾ belief that “ideas should freely spread from one to another over the globe,” (2005, p.108) emphasizing that the unrestricted flow of knowledge, information, and culture is essential to a thriving democracy. While Jefferson recognized the potential dangers of intellectual property laws in limiting access to ideas, he did not oppose copyright itself. Instead, he acknowledged its role to motivate innovation, stating, “Society may give an exclusive right to the profits arising from them, as an encouragement to men to pursue ideas which may produce utility” (2005, p.108). Jefferson’s recognition of the fine balance between encouraging innovation and ensuring that knowledge is shared and accessible is incredibly relevant today.

(3) Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), one of the Founding Fathers of the United States and the principal author of the Declaration of Independence. In 1789, he acknowledged the need for limited exclusive rights for inventors and authors to promote innovation and creativity. As the first Secretary of State, Jefferson played a significant role in shaping the early U.S. patent system. He advocated for a balanced approach that rewarded creators while ensuring that ideas remained accessible to the public. In an 1813 letter to Isaac McPherson, he expressed his belief that ideas, once shared, belong to all and cannot be owned in the same way as physical property. (Article 1, Section 8, Clause 8: Thomas Jefferson to Isaac McPherson, no date)

(4) Founded in 1826, Hachette Livre is a French publishing company, the second-largest trade and educational publisher in the world, and another name in the list of the Big Five publishing houses. Which include Penguin/Random House, Harper Collins, Simon and Schuster and Macmillan (Nova, 2024).

One major effect of intellectual property (IP) law is that it turns creative works into commercial products. Copyrights, trademarks, and patents allow creators to control how their work is shared and sold. This encourages innovation and artistic production, but in practice, it often benefits large corporations rather than individual artists. Companies like Amazon, Apple, and Disney use IP laws to dominate entire industries, profiting from music, films, software, and literature while controlling how they are accessed and distributed.

In 2020, the House Judiciary Committee found that Amazon “has significant market power over the entire book industry, including sales, distribution, and publishing. In the U.S. market, Amazon accounts for over half of all print book sales and over 80 percent of e-book sales” (Bond et al., 2022, p.213). A publisher wouldn’t be able to sustain itself if their books are not sold on Amazon. Even the biggest publishers can’t compete with Amazon’s control of the book market. In an article published by *The Nation* (Vaheesan and Pincock, 2024), it is stated that Amazon “won’t hesitate to retaliate against publishers that step out of line”. In 2014, when Amazon and Hachette⁽⁴⁾ were engaged in a dispute regarding the distribution of publications, Amazon marginalised the publisher on its website for a period of eight months. “These retaliatory games include removing the “buy” button beneath a title’s listing on the site, delaying shipping books to customers, claiming that titles are out of stock when Amazon is actually just refusing to restock the titles, and rejecting pre-sales for new books” (Vaheesan and Pincock, 2024). This had a significant impact on the publisher’s sales, with Hachette reporting an “18 percent drop in US sales during the third quarter of 2014” (Vaheesan and Pincock, 2024). Hachette authors also experienced a decline in income and perceived influence in the publishing world when Amazon stopped selling their books.

IP laws have become weapons for corporate giants to crush competition and exploit creators rather than protect them. Amazon’s power on the book industry proves how these laws serve as tools for monopolization, allowing one company to dictate who succeeds and who is silenced. Its retaliation against Hachette, deliberately sabotaging sales and punishing authors, shows the ruthless lengths they will go to in order

to maintain control. Until these rigged systems are dismantled, corporations like Amazon will continue to profit while artists, writers, and independent publishers are left fighting for survival.

Strict intellectual property laws also create financial barriers to accessing culture and knowledge. By restricting the use of copyrighted materials, these laws make it difficult for people with lower socioeconomic status and institutions to afford essential resources. For example, schools and libraries must pay high licensing fees to legally distribute textbooks, academic papers, and other educational materials.

A recent paper *The Cost of Knowledge: Academic Journal Pricing and Research Dissemination* (An, Williams and Xiao, 2024) research the economic barriers caused by high academic journal prices, which disproportionately affect institutions with fewer resources, stating: “The inability to pay for subscriptions restricts access to research to privileged individuals and institutions. This may create an imbalance in the infrastructure required by research and collaboration opportunities, widening the gap in knowledge dissemination and knowledge creation across institutions, communities, and countries” (2024, p. 3).

The research further highlights how market power in the academic publishing industry leads to restricted access to research, particularly for lower-ranked institutions and developing countries. Think of all the Academia.edu and MIT Press peer-reviewed journals and high quality images (e.g. JSTOR) that are inaccessible to me as I write this thesis. This disproportionately affects students and researchers in underfunded institutions, who may struggle to access the materials they need for learning and who cannot access online libraries via their institution. The very tools meant to bridge gaps or produce knowledge now further entrench social and economic inequality. This is not just about access, it’s about opportunity. Wealthier individuals, with privileged access to culture and knowledge, continue to solidify their standing, while those with a lower socioeconomic status are left to struggle against rising barriers.

Copyright and intellectual property laws have become tools for corporate monopolization, and cultural gatekeeping. Like Jefferson stated, these laws were created to protect creators and create profit from their own work as an encouragement to pursue new ideas, but now have evolved into a system where it reinforces economic inequality, privileging large corporations while restricting public access to knowledge, and punishing those who dare to engage with culture in progressive ways.

To understand these tensions more deeply, we can turn to Walter Benjamin’s theory of the *aura* which helps us understand how reproduction challenges traditional ideas of ownership and value in cultural works in the context of piracy and intellectual property. Benjamin’s concept helps us understand the transformation of art in the age of mechanical reproduction, a concept that resonates strongly with the modern digital landscape. Through piracy and compression technologies, works are democratized and made more accessible, but this often comes at the cost of commercial value. In the next chapter, we will delve into how piracy disrupts traditional systems of value through Benjamin’s concept of *aura*.

In an era where digital media can be copied and shared instantaneously, the idea of authenticity and originality becomes increasingly complex. The corporate control over intellectual property not only restricts access but also alters how we perceive and interact with media. As traditional ownership models collapse under digital reproduction, questions of authenticity and originality become central. Walter Benjamin's concept of *aura* provides a another perspective to analyze this shift, revealing how technological reproduction redefines the value of art in the digital age. As mechanical and digital reproduction erode traditional distinctions between originals and copies, piracy emerges as both a challenge to capitalist modes of ownership and a tool for democratising access to media. This chapter covers how pirated media is reshaping our understanding of artistic value, accessibility, and innovation, raising questions about the future of cultural distribution in an age of endless replication.

Walter Benjamin's concept of the *aura*, introduced in his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936), refers to the unique presence and authenticity of an artwork tied to its specific time and place, stating "In even the most perfect reproduction, one thing is lacking: the here and now of the work of art—its unique existence in a particular place. It is this unique existence—and nothing else—that bears the mark of the history to which the work has been subject" (Benjamin, 1936, p.21). According to Benjamin, traditional works of art, such as paintings or sculptures, possess an authenticity that is gained from their physical existence and the historical context in which they are situated. "Whereas the authentic work retains its full authority in the face of a reproduction made by hand, which it brands a forgery, this is not the case with technological reproduction" (Benjamin, 1936, p.21) stating that technological reproduction, unlike handmade reproductions, which are seen as forgeries, undermines the authority of the authentic work by creating copies that are not easily dismissed as fraudulent, thus challenging the uniqueness and *aura* of the original.

He mentions that there are two reasons for this. The first reason is that it is easier to make copies of things using technology than by hand. And his second reason is that technological reproduction can place the copy of the original in situations which the original itself cannot, Benjamin gives us an example: "it enables the original to meet the recipient halfway, whether in the form of a photograph or in that gramophone record. The cathedral leaves its site to be received in the studio of an art lover; the choral work performed in an auditorium or in the open air is enjoyed in a private room" (Benjamin, 1936, p.21). Benjamin's concern that the *aura* is "fundamentally threatened by technological reproduction, which allows artworks to be mechanically copied, thereby stripping them of their unique presence and making them infinitely reproducible" (Benjamin, 1936, p.21).

Benjamin argued that the loss of *aura*, while diminishing the uniqueness of traditional art, had the potential to democratize art by making it accessible to the public: "It might be stated as a general formula that the technology of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the sphere of tradition. By replicating the work many times over, it substitutes a mass existence" (Benjamin, 1936, p.22) and shifts the function of art from ritual to politics, enabling a more participatory and politically engaged relationship with art.

Just as photography and film disrupted traditional notions of artistic originality in Benjamin's time, modern digital reproduction technologies (through file-sharing networks, torrents and compression) further blur the distinction between original and copy. In this sense, pirated media can be seen as the next stage in the transformation of art, removing the constraints of ownership and exclusivity. This begs the question: Can digital reproductions, including pirated media, create new forms of *aura* or authenticity?

Building on Benjamin's idea that mechanical reproduction changes the way we perceive and engage with art, John Berger further examines how mass media and reproduction alter the authority of art and who has access to it. John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* (1972) provides a framework for understanding the cultural implica-

tions of digital piracy. Berger builds on Benjamin's idea of the aura, he focuses on how reproduction challenges the power structures of the art world, making art more accessible and less tied to elitist institutions.

Berger explains that the visual arts have always been viewed as something unique and distinct. He states, "originally this preserve was magical or sacred" (Berger, 1972, p.32), meaning that art was once reserved for special, almost spiritual, contexts. Initially, it was about the physical locations where art was created, such as palaces or private homes. Over time, art became more associated with the social elite, entering the culture of the ruling class. Despite this shift, art remained physically separate and isolated in those exclusive spaces. As Berger notes, "During all this history the authority of art was inseparable from the particular authority of the preserve" (Berger, 1972, p.32). In other words, the power of art was tied to the specific, restricted spaces in which it resided. Furthermore, he adds, "The experience of art, which at first was the experience of ritual, was set apart from the rest of life - precisely in order to be able to exercise power over it" (Berger, 1972, p.32). This suggests that the experience of art was intentionally separated from everyday life to maintain control over its meaning and influence. Berger argues that the advent of reproduction technologies challenges this power structure, as it makes art more accessible to the broader public.

This statement ties strongly with debates about pirated intellectual property. Digital reproductions, even pirated ones, can create a new kind of aura rooted in accessibility, shared experience, and cultural relevance. For example, pirated media often circulates outside of official channels, creating a sense of subcultural authenticity or resistance to corporate control. This new form of aura is not tied to the physical object or its institutional context but emerges from the ways in which the reproduced media is shared, reinterpreted, and integrated into everyday life. "For the first time ever, images of art have become ephemeral, ubiquitous, insubstantial, available, valueless, free. They surround us in the same way as a language surrounds us. They have entered the mainstream of life over which they no longer, in themselves, have power" (Berger, 1972, p.32).

In this sense, the aura or "authenticity" of pirated media lies in its ability to connect people, challenge power structures, and create new cultural meanings, even as it undermines the traditional aura or authority of the original work.

While Berger was concerned with how television and photography reshaped the meaning of art, Hito Steyerl⁽⁵⁾ takes this discussion into today's digital era, examining how low-resolution, widely circulated images operate within capitalism. Steyerl gives us valuable insight on how degraded images (often pirated) are stripped of commercial value yet gain new political and social significance through their widespread accessibility, reinforcing this new form of aura or authenticity.

In her essay *In Defense of the Poor Image* (2009), she investigates how compressed, low-resolution and widely distributed digital films and images, what she calls poor images, function within contemporary capitalism. "The poor image [...] has been expelled from the sheltered paradise that cinema seems to have once been. After being kicked out of the protected and often protectionist arena of national culture, discarded from commercial circulation, these works have become travelers in a digital no-man's land, constantly shifting their resolution and format, speed and media, sometimes even losing names and credits along the way" (Steyerl, 2009).

Her contemporary view on digital image reproduction aligns with digital piracy on intellectual property as well. As Steyerl notes, *poor images* are removed from their original context, no longer confined to the protectionist⁽⁶⁾ realms of national culture or commercial circulation. Instead, they inhabit a "digital no-man's land" where they are constantly transformed, losing resolution, format, and even identifying details like names and credits.

This process of degradation and redistribution mirrors the dynamics of digital piracy, where intellectual property is often disregarded in favor of accessibility and dissemination. Steyerl argues that the *poor image*, by shedding its visual and commercial substance, regains political potency and creates a new aura, "This aura is no longer based on the permanence of the 'original,' but on the transience of the copy" (2009). Steyerl is proposing that the value of an image

(5) Hito Steyerl is a German filmmaker, moving image artist, theorist, and innovator of the essay documentary. Her principal topics of interest are media, technology, and the global circulation of images. Steyerl holds a PhD in philosophy from the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna.

(6) Protectionism, policy of protecting domestic industries against foreign competition by means of tariffs, subsidies, import quotas, or other restrictions or handicaps placed on the imports of foreign competitors. Protectionist policies have been implemented by many countries despite the fact that virtually all mainstream economists agree that the world economy generally benefits from free trade. (Britannica money, 2025)

may lie less in its exclusivity and more in its ability to circulate, provoke, and connect.

So, rather than Benjamin's claim that aura is lost, we might say it mutates, into something fluid, dynamic, and collective. Pirated media, instead of being a mere copy, becomes a living artifact, shaped by its digital journey and community interaction.

As we move further into an age of endless replication and digital circulation, the question of whether digital reproductions can create new forms of aura or authenticity remains open. Perhaps the answer lies not in trying to reclaim the aura of the past, but in reimagining what authenticity means in a world where the line between original and copy continues to blur. By embracing the transformative potential of digital reproduction, we may discover new ways to value and engage with art and media, ones that prioritize accessibility, participation, and innovation over exclusivity and control.

Benjamin's concept of the *aura*, once tied to the unique, physical presence of art, is increasingly challenged by digital reproduction, which democratizes access but also undermines traditional authority. Berger's analysis of mass media further highlights how reproduction disrupts the exclusivity of art, making it more accessible to the public and dissolving power structures tied to elite institutions. Steyerl's idea of the *poor image* further illustrates how low-resolution, widely circulated images, often stripped of commercial value, gain new political and social significance in the digital landscape. This shift in perspective also calls for a reconsideration of the legal and economic structures that govern creative work. If traditional copyright law was built on the foundation of scarcity and ownership, how does it function in a digital landscape where replication is effortless and access is crucial? The next chapter explores alternatives to copyright, investigating how open licensing, digital commons, and decentralized distribution models offer pathways toward a more balanced and sustainable approach to intellectual property.

Having examined how digital reproduction and piracy challenges traditional systems of ownership and authenticity, the next step is to investigate the legal frameworks that govern intellectual property. As the digital landscape shifts, these traditional frameworks become increasingly inadequate, prompting the need for new, more inclusive systems that prioritize access and collective participation.

Copyright law has historically functioned as a mechanism of control, reinforcing economic inequalities and privileging corporate ownership over creative works. As discussed in previous chapters, the digital age has fundamentally destabilized traditional notions of ownership and intellectual property, necessitating a re-evaluation of the systems governing creative production and distribution. By examining open licensing models, this chapter considers a few possibilities of a more equitable and sustainable approach to intellectual property.

One of the open licensing models is the Creative Commons (CC) license. It offers a flexible alternative to traditional copyright by allowing creators to retain some rights while enabling public access. Lawrence Lessig, the co-founder of CC, states the motivations behind his decision to set up the CC: "At the time, the prevailing view was if you weren't in the traditional 'all rights reserved' camp, you must be anti-copyright or a pirate. We sought to establish some middle ground because we recognized that, in fact, many people believed in copyright but did not believe that their creative works should be as tightly regulated as they were under the all rights reserved model" (*Interview with Lawrence Lessig*, 2011). This quote reflects Lessig's vision behind creating Creative Commons, enabling creators to share and build upon others' works without restrictive legal barriers, "in which the rules of exchange are not defined by commerce but depend on the ability to share and build on the work of others freely" (*Interview with Lawrence Lessig*, 2011).

One example of a platform that relies heavily on Creative Commons licensing is Wikipedia. Wikipedia's content is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0, which allows users to share and adapt the material, provided they give appropriate credit and share any derivative

works under the same license (Creative Commons, no date). This has enabled Wikipedia to become a global repository of freely accessible knowledge.

Copyleft is another legal framework that builds on the principles of openness, ensuring derivative works remain open and free for modification and redistribution. Unlike traditional copyright, which restricts use, Copyleft mandates that all adaptations continue to follow the same open-access principles. It is most commonly associated with the free software movement, particularly through licenses like the GNU General Public License (GNU GPL, or simply GPL), which was created by Richard Stallman in 1989. Under Copyleft licenses such as the GPL, software and other creative works are made available to the public with the stipulation that anyone who distributes or alters the work must also make the source code or content available under the same Copyleft terms. This ensures that subsequent users have the same freedoms to use, modify, and share the work as the original creator intended.

The GPL project was created by Richard Stallman with the goal of providing a complete UNIX⁽⁷⁾-compatible software system that could be freely given to everyone. Stallman explains in *The GNU Manifesto*, “I am writing so that I can give it away free to everyone who can use it” (Stallman, 1987). He envisioned a system that would ultimately replace proprietary software and would be freely shared and distributed among users. The concept of Copyleft is fundamental to GPL. Stallman was committed to ensuring that GPL software remained free. As he puts it, “Everyone will be permitted to modify and redistribute GPL, but no distributor will be allowed to restrict its further redistribution. That is to say, proprietary modifications will not be allowed. I want to make sure that all versions of GNU remain free” (Stallman, 1987). This ensures that users can freely modify and share the software without the fear of restrictions or commercialization.

Stallman also rejected proprietary software, stating that “Software sellers want to divide the users and conquer them, making each user agree not to share with others” (Stallman, 1987). He felt that this conflicted with his values, so he dedicated himself to creating software that would be free for all. He further explained, “I consider that the Golden Rule requires that

if I like a program I must share it with other people who like it” (Stallman, 1987).

Both Lawrence Lessig and Richard Stallman have advocated a shift away from ownership and control. They advocate for systems that prioritize accessibility, collaboration, and the public good. Their work demonstrates that it is possible to create legal frameworks that respect creators’ rights while simultaneously promoting the broader societal benefits of knowledge sharing and cultural exchange.

While alternative models like Creative Commons and Copyleft question traditional notions of copyright, they still operate within the broader framework of intellectual property law. Rather than discarding copyright, these models seek to work within and expand it, offering a more inclusive approach that balances creators’ rights with the public’s need for access to culture and knowledge. By critically examining these models, we see how they can shift the balance, encouraging accessibility and collaboration while still protecting creators’ rights.

By critically examining open licensing models like Creative Commons and Copyleft, we have seen how alternative frameworks can shift the balance in the digital landscape. Where traditional models of ownership and control are increasingly questioned, it is essential that we rethink intellectual property laws to foster more equitable systems. As digital media continues to evolve, so too must the legal frameworks that govern it, moving away from exclusionary practices and toward inclusive systems that reflect the diverse ways in which we engage with and create cultural and intellectual works. Only by embracing this paradigm shift can we ensure a more just and accessible future for media, creativity, and knowledge in the digital age.

(7) UNIX is an operating system that was first developed in the 1960s, and has undergone continuous development ever since. The term ‘operating system’ refers to the suite of programs that enable a computer to function. It is a stable, multi-user, multi-tasking system designed for use on servers, desktops and laptops. (UNIX Introduction | High Performance Computing, 2001)

The study's examination of copyright and intellectual property (IP) laws reveals a system that, while intended to protect creators, has been exploited by corporate interests to increase economic inequality and restrict access to culture and knowledge. Instead of encouraging innovation, these laws frequently serve as tools for monopolistic control, marginalizing independent artists and underprivileged creators. The struggles of musicians and the publishing dominance of Amazon exemplify how IP laws often privilege corporate power over artistic freedom and public access. Furthermore, the financial barriers imposed by strict copyright enforcement disproportionately affect lower socioeconomic communities, deepening existing inequalities in education and cultural participation.

By engaging with Walter Benjamin's concept of the aura, we examined how digital reproduction challenges traditional notions of ownership and authenticity, breaking down exclusivity while reshaping cultural significance. John Berger's analysis of mass media and Hito Steyerl's concept of the poor image further emphasize how digital circulation democratizes art but also disrupts established hierarchies. In this context, pirated media emerges not simply as a legal violation but as a form of resistance, one that redefines authenticity, prioritizes collective engagement, and challenges capitalist ownership structures.

Alternative models like Creative Commons and Copyleft offer a path forward, proving that intellectual property frameworks can be both inclusive and sustainable. Advocates such as Lawrence Lessig and Richard Stallman demonstrate that it is possible to balance the rights of creators with public access to knowledge. These models shift the focus from corporate profit to collaboration and accessibility, challenging the exclusionary nature of traditional copyright laws and advocating for a more just and equitable cultural landscape.

Ultimately, this study underscores the urgent need to rethink intellectual property laws in the digital age. The current system, dominated by corporate interests, stifles creativity, restricts access, and exacerbates inequality. To encourage a truly open and innovative cultural sphere, we must embrace alternative frame-

works that prioritise accessibility, and collaboration. A future where knowledge and creativity are democratised requires ongoing resistance to restrictive IP laws and a commitment to legal structures that reflect the evolving ways in which we create, share, and engage with culture. By challenging the system and advocating for a more inclusive approach, we can ensure that the benefits of intellectual property serve society as a whole, not just those with the means to control it.

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