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Editing Roald Dahl's Classics: Changes in Literary Authorship and the Influence of the Digital Medium

Wiel, Karlijn van de

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Karlijn van de Wiel (s2526913)

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**Editing Roald Dahl's Classics: Changes in Literary Authorship and the Influence of the
Digital Medium**

Abstract

Literary authorship has traditionally been conceptualised by the values of individuality, originality, ownership, and authority. In the digital era, we are experiencing new attitudes towards and ideas on authorship which show that these four values are being uprooted. Namely, big publishers are editing texts of deceased children's book authors such as Roald Dahl. At the same time, the digital medium has become the dominant means of interaction and dissemination of text in society. This thesis aims to identify in which ways the digital medium is taking part in our changing conceptualisations of and attitudes towards literary authorship. To do so, this thesis follows a conceptual framework proposed by Kathleen Fitzpatrick. She theorises that the technological properties and our uses of a medium indirectly shape our conceptualisations of and attitudes towards text and concepts such as scholarly authorship. Therefore, the digital medium and print medium indirectly create different ideas on text and scholarly authorship. Additionally, she posits that this mechanism interplays with societal expectations and the practice of the publisher. Eventually, this thesis presents that literary authorship has changed on all four values by which we traditionally conceptualised authorship and this partly finds its origin with the digital medium and the digitisation of text. Namely, our use of the medium and digital text have indirectly altered our conceptualisations of and attitudes towards text and the practice of the literary author.

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Introduction

While he was alive, Roald Dahl expressed harsh criticism on the idea of his publisher editing his original texts after his death.¹ Even so, 33 years after his death, British publisher Puffin neglected his concern and edited and republished seventeen of his titles in total. Currently, society centralises topics of diversity and inclusivity. Puffin has decided to make changes to Dahl's text, because of his stereotypical and supposed insulting use of language, such as using the words 'fat' or 'ugly' to describe his characters.² To do so, the publisher collaborated with so-called sensitivity readers to edit Dahl's texts into gender neutral or considered-polite language. For example, in his book *The Witches*, Puffin changed 'you can't go round pulling the hair of every lady you meet, even if she is wearing gloves. Just you try it and see what happens' into 'besides, there are plenty of other reasons why women might wear wigs and there is certainly nothing wrong with that', after Dahl writes about bald witches.³ Puffin states that this way, Dahl's texts can still 'be enjoyed by all children today'.⁴

It can be argued as reasonable that Puffin has decided to edit Dahl's texts. Namely, his texts are being read by children and these might otherwise learn to use insulting language.⁵ For this reason, this type of editing is noticeably happening in children's books. For example, Enid Blyton's stories have also endured rewritings of various offensive references and alterations to more gender-neutral language.⁶ Because of critique from authors, readers and other publishers, Blyton's publisher eventually decided to discontinue publishing the edited versions. However, the case of Dahl presents a new development in the practice of authorship. Namely, even after critique, Puffin has openly decided to continue publishing Dahl's edited texts.

¹ D. Alberge, 'Roald Dahl Threatened Publisher with 'Enormous Crocodile' if They Changed His Words', *The Guardian*, 25 February 2023 <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/feb/25/roald-dahl-threatened-publisher-with-enormous-crocodile-if-they-changed-his-words>>.

² S. Bucksbaum, 'Authors Criticize Decision to Edit Roald Dahl's Children's Books to Be More Inclusive', *Entertainment Weekly*, 20 February 2023 <<https://ew.com/books/authors-criticize-edits-roald-dahl-books/>>.

³ E. Harrison, 'The 6 Most Glaring Edits to Roald Dahl's Books by Publisher Puffin', *The Independent*, 23 February 2023 <<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/news/roald-dahl-edits-books-censored-witches-b2288252.html>>.

⁴ Bucksbaum, 'Author Criticize Decision'.

⁵ Z. Dubno, 'Publishers are Cynically using 'Sensitivity Readers' to Protect their Bottom Lines', *The Guardian*, 9 March 2023 <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/commentisfree/2023/mar/09/roald-dahl-censorship-sensitivity-readers-books>>.

⁶ S. Cain, 'Famous Five Go Back to Original Language After Update Flops', *The Guardian*, 16 September 2016 <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/sep/16/famous-five-go-back-to-original-language-after-update-flops>>.

Puffin's act is stirring debate and creating tension amongst publishers, authors, and readers. Puffin states that it is beneficial to the author, as it would guarantee the survival of Dahl's texts in this society that centralises diversity and inclusivity.⁷ Even so, author Philip Pullman states that Puffin should just have let Dahl's texts 'go out of print' instead.⁸ Additionally, various authors state that Puffin's act is 'absurd censorship', a breach of artistic freedom and affects the 'integrity of such work'.⁹ This debate on Dahl exemplifies that we are now experiencing conflicting ideas on literary authorship in traditional publishing.

What these debates fail to address is that Dahl's texts are now being published and read in society that is different from the society in which Dahl's texts were published. To clarify, authors are now operating in a society that also includes the digital medium and digitisation of text next to the print medium. Currently, we are still researching and identifying the effects of the digital medium on society. This thesis aims to explore in what ways our conceptualisations of, and attitudes towards, authorship are changing, and in what ways these changes can be related back to the digital medium and digitisation of text.

This cause-and-effect relation between the digital medium and our ideas on and attitudes towards text and authorship are not direct and can still be debated. In this thesis, it is considered plausible that the digital medium can reshape our ideas and attitudes, such as our conceptualisation of literary authorship. Namely, research has already identified relations between the use of a medium and our conceptualisations of concepts can be identified. For example, Adriaan van der Weel theorises that because we are experiencing shorter texts online, our attention span is also shifted towards shorter texts instead of longer texts.¹⁰ We can find similar instances now as well. For example, the existence of online fora allows everyone to have an opinion, and the digital medium allows texts to be reshaped and republished at any time. At the same time, we are now also experiencing an increasingly demanding reader as well as the posthumously editing of Dahl's texts. We can also see that our ideas on authorship is notably happening to all authors, whether alive or deceased. This seems to suggest our conceptualisation of text in general is changing.

⁷ Bucksbaum, 'Author Criticize Decision'.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ T. Koch, and S.C. Fanjul, 'Changes to Roald Dahl's Stories Trigger Global Outrage and Doubts about Their Legality', *El Pais*, 21 February 2023 <<https://english.elpais.com/culture/2023-02-21/changes-to-roald-dahls-stories-trigger-global-outrage-and-doubts-about-their-legality.html>>.

¹⁰ A. van der Weel, 'Literary Authorship in the Digital Age', in *The Cambridge Handbook of Literary Authorship*, ed. By G. Buelens and M. Demoor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 230.

Van der Weel also describes the relation between the medium and how we view concepts in our world, such as authorship, as a medial ‘bias’.¹¹ With medial bias, he explains that because every medium allows for different uses, and each medium presents its product differently, this indirectly generates different ideas on concepts, such as our attention span or authorship.¹² He theorises with a technologically deterministic view, which would argue that technologically itself directly shapes our ways of thinking and causes societal effects.¹³ He asserts that:

The social position of authorship is always founded in a particular sociotechnical constellation of a particular literate mentality and a particular dominant technology for the dissemination of texts. (‘Appropriation’, 2)

As a result of the coexistence of the digital as well as the print medium, ‘two social ideologies’ exist on authorship and text.¹⁴ This explanation could explain current conflicting values on authorship that come forward in the debate on Dahl’s edits. Van der Weel’s theory on a sociotechnical relation offers opportunity to investigate in what ways the digital medium and the digitisation of text is taking part in reshaping our ideas on text and authorship.

Kathleen Fitzpatrick has already investigated current sociotechnical changes in relation to scholarly authorship. In short, she argues that the digital medium and our new uses of and ideas on text are of significant influence on the changing conceptualisation of scholarly authorship.¹⁵ With regards to authorship, Fitzpatrick argues like Van der Weel that the print and digital medium differ greatly in its use and representation of text, which causes different ideas on text as well as concepts such as authorship. However, she critically notes that her theory is not built on technological determinist views, as is Van der Weel’s.¹⁶ Instead, she argues that the workings of the sociotechnical relation interplay with societal expectations, as

¹¹ A. van der Weel, *Changing Our Textual Minds: Towards A Digital Order of Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), pp. 13, 18.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ ‘Technological Determinism Theory’, *University of Kentucky*, 19 February 2001 <<https://www.uky.edu/~drlane/capstone/mass/determinism.htm>>.

¹⁴ Van der Weel, *Changing Our Textual Minds*, p. 215; A. van der Weel, ‘Appropriation: Towards a Sociotechnical History of Authorship’, *Authorship*, 4 (2015), 2, pp. 1-11 <doi.org/10.21825/aj.v4i2.1438>.

¹⁵ K. Fitzpatrick, ‘The Digital Future of Authorship: Rethinking Originality’, *Culture Machine*, 12, (2011); K. Fitzpatrick, *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academy* (New York: NYU Press, 2011).

¹⁶ Fitzpatrick, *Planned Obsolescence*, p. 53.

well as the practice of the author and publisher, in shaping our ideas on and attitudes towards authorship.¹⁷

For example, Fitzpatrick highlights that with the print medium, scholarly authorship was focused on finishing research, but with the digital medium we have come to centralise process in the practice instead.¹⁸ She identifies that this change partly finds its origin in the different technological properties of the digital medium as opposed to the print medium. For example, the digital allows for direct editing and re-publishing of text, which she terms ‘versioning’.¹⁹ As a result, we also expect scholars to collaborate, edit and republish their texts. This would explain why the practice of scholarly is becoming more centralised on process. These changes in the practice also reshape our conceptualisation of scholarly authorship. Namely, that scholarly authors produce texts, but their texts are not necessarily fixed and can, or should, be updated. This is another instance which exemplifies that we are seeing that the medium can take a part in creating our conceptualisations.

Moreover, Fitzpatrick asserts that in the print era, we have conceptualised authorship by four values. Namely, the values of individuality, originality, ownership, and authority.²⁰ In her research, Fitzpatrick already identifies that changes are taking place in authorship with regards to these four values, such as the change from an individual to a collaborative practice. Even though Fitzpatrick’s framework is focused on the scholarly author, her framework presents most suitability to investigate in what ways the digital medium is reshaping our conceptualisations of and attitudes towards literary authorship. Namely, Fitzpatrick’s identification of these four values and her conceptual framework will make it possible to identify on what exact parts we are now seeing changes in literary authorship, and how these changes can be related back to the digital medium. For this reason, I will follow Fitzpatrick’s theory to investigate in what ways the digital medium and digitisation of text is reshaping our conceptualisations of and attitudes towards literary authorship on the values of individuality, originality, ownership, and authority.

Key to Fitzpatrick’s framework is the notion that our conceptualisation of the scholarly author interplays with our conceptualisation of text, medium, but also societal expectations, the practice of the publisher and literary authorship. Our ideas on authorship as well as our

¹⁷ Fitzpatrick, *Planned Obsolescence*, p. 53.

¹⁸ Fitzpatrick, ‘The Digital Future of Authorship’, pp. 10, 11, 12, 15.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 15, 16.

attitudes towards authorship are also being shaped by the practice of the author. For example, authors operate with author's rights. It is written in law that it is only in the right of the author to sell their text. Therefore, we relate authorship with ownership over their original text. Therefore, Chapter 1 of this thesis will present an overview of the practice of the literary author in the UK. The practice of the author is also in part shaped by the practice of the publisher. Therefore, the publisher's practice and its interplay with the author's practice requires clarification as well. This chapter will explain the author's relation to the practice of the publisher with the help of Michael Bhaskar's framework titled 'The Content Machine'.²¹ Michael Bhaskar's theory will help clarify in what ways the system of publishing operates, and how this shapes the practice and our conceptualisation of the literary author.

In Chapter 2, I will offer a detailed analysis of Fitzpatrick's theoretical framework, and I will present its operationalisation in this thesis. I will clarify Fitzpatrick's analysis of in what ways the print and digital medium differ, such as their different uses as well as creating conceptualisations of text. Moreover, I will clarify Fitzpatrick's idea of how the print medium and print text took part in constructing the four values of authorship by which we conceptualised authorship in the print era. These four values are individuality, originality, ownership, and authority. In short, this thesis will follow Fitzpatrick's line of thinking that the digital medium offers new possibilities as well as a new conceptualisations of text, and that these affect our conceptualisations of and attitudes toward authorship. Moreover, this chapter will present that our conceptualisation of the literary author interplays with the practice of the author, the practice of the publisher, societal expectations, as well as the medium and our conceptualisation of text.

In Chapter 3, I will implement Fitzpatrick's framework to analyse in what ways the digital medium is reshaping our conceptualisation of and attitude towards literary authorship. To do so, this chapter is subdivided into the subsections of the values individuality, originality, ownership, and authority. This thesis is structured cumulatively, because each value expands the other value, and therefore this order best clarifies the relation between the four values. In each section, I will analyse the changes we are seeing now for the value, and how these changes can be linked back to the technological properties and uses of the digital medium and

²¹ M. Bhaskar, *The Content Machine: towards a Theory of Publishing from the Printing Press to the Digital Network* (London: Anthem Press, 2013).

the digitisation of text. I will frequently reflect on the debate on Dahl because his debate exemplifies the changes we are seeing now in literary authorship.

Eventually, thesis will show that the digital medium is taking a significant part in reshaping our conceptualisation of authorship on the values of individuality, originality, ownership, and authority. Overall, the possibilities and our uses of the digital medium, as well as our new mindset on text, is causing us to treat and conceptualise literary authorship in different ways than we did in the print era. As a result, we must start to embrace that new forms of authorship are on the rise as well as that the practice of literary authorship is changing.

Chapter 1: The Changing Practice of the Literary Author from the 19th Century until Now

Authorship has always been changing, but defining a baseline for what I will pose as traditional authorship will help clarify in what exact ways authorship now differs. To do so, this thesis follows that we constructed a conceptualisation of authorship in the 19th and 20th century, and the start of The Berne Convention of 1886. Andrew Bennett underscores that economic changes as a result of The Berne Convention was what created our ‘modern sense of the author’.²² For that reason, I will refer to this conceptualisation of authorship as “traditional authorship”. In this thesis, I theorise like Fitzpatrick that our general conceptualisation of authorship results from an interplay between the print medium, text, the practice of the author, the practice of the publisher, as well as societal expectations. It is central to Fitzpatrick’s theory that these factors always interplay and change, and therefore our ideas of authorship change as well.

To clarify, legal agreements such as author’s rights partly shape the practice of the publisher and author, and by that our conceptualisations of authorship. For example, for a long period of time it was generally conceptualised that it authors legally owned their original texts. However, societal changes challenged these agreements, such as that the digital medium gave rise to the online publishing of fanfiction. Fanfiction caused uproar on ownership rights of authors. Eventually, fanfiction has under specific agreements become legalised. At the same time, it has redefined the rights of the author. Namely, fans can adapt author’s original stories, but it is only in the original author’s right to eventually make money from these stories. This redefining of the rights therefore reshapes the practice of authorship, as well as our conceptualisation of and attitude towards the author. In short, the interplay between these factors and our conceptualisations of authorship is circular.

We are now also experiencing changes in the practice of the children’s book author in the United Kingdom. Part of these changes can be related back to the publisher. For example, publishers are editing author’s texts post-mortem. The publisher therefore also has a significant part in shaping the practice of authorship and therefore our conceptualisation of authorship.

Therefore, I will explain these the practice of the author and the publisher in this chapter. In the first section I will reflect on the traditional practice and conceptualisation of

²² A. Bennet, *The Author* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 49.

the author in the UK. In the second section I will explain the current practice of the literary author in the UK. This information is necessary to identify in Chapter 3 in what ways the current practice of the author and publisher, and our changing values and attitudes, interplay with the digital medium. I will explain the interplay between the practice of the author and the practice of the publisher in the UK with the help of Michael Bhaskar's framework on the publishing system titled 'The Content Machine'.²³

1.1 Our Traditional Conceptualisation and Practice of Authorship

The Berne Convention of 1886 exemplifies the ways in which our conceptualisation of literary authorship interplays with the practice of the author and societal changes. At the end of the 19th century, many writers in the UK were publishing their texts but facing troubles with maintaining ownership over their texts internationally. For example, as copyright was only limited to the UK, author's texts could be copied and sold lawfully in other countries without having to compensate the author.²⁴ To illustrate, Charles Dickens' texts received a lot of attention internationally and among which American interest to sell his texts.²⁵ The lack of international legal protection left American publishers the opportunity to print Dickens' texts, without having to compensate Dickens. This lack of protection negatively affected both his legal, as well as emotional ownership on text.

In this thesis, I will use the term emotional ownership over the legal term moral ownership. Emotional ownership encompasses the same ideas as moral ownership; the author's 'right of first attribution', 'right to object to false attribution', and 'right to control the form of the work'.²⁶ However, the term emotional ownership also encompasses the author's personal emotional connection to the work, such as that a literary work can also be a product of the author's personal experiences and their emotional connection because of effort. Later in this thesis it will become clear that a lot of debate on current changes in authorship also stems from author's emotional connection to their work and stories.

²³ Bhaskar, *The Content Machine*.

²⁴ K. Goldman, 'Dickens', *Creative Law Center*, n.d. <<https://creativelawcenter.com/dickens-american-copyright/>>.

²⁵ S. Murray, 'Authorship', in *The Oxford Handbook of Publishing*, ed. by A. Phillips and M. Bhaskar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 41; Goldman, 'Dickens'.

²⁶ 'Digitisation and Conservation: Overview of Copyright and Moral Rights in UK Law', *Tate Papers*, 2 April 2019 <<https://www.tate.org.uk/research/tate-papers/08/digitisation-and-conservation-overview-of-copyright-and-moral-rights-in-uk-law#:~:text=In%20the%20UK%20moral%20rights,work%20is%20copied%20or%20communicated.>>>.

As authors faced these difficulties, they expressed a need for legal changes which resulted in the treaty of ‘The Berne Convention’ in 1886. This treaty stated that all types of authors gained legal ownership over their original text in the countries who signed the agreement, which was focused on the original text and not the idea.²⁷ Not all countries immediately signed this agreement and most only joined later. Many countries believed at the time that their national agreements sufficed. However, for example USA’s legal agreements on copyright at the time caused ‘serious difficulties’ for European authors trying to maintain their copyright in the USA. As a result, the USA joined The Berne Convention 100 years later as well.²⁸ Right now, 193 states are a member of the treaty and follow similar agreements on author rights.²⁹

Over time, the law has been altered several times by which its agreements have been expanded or reshaped because of the changing practice and society. Currently, The Berne Convention is constructed on several agreements. First, all countries who have signed this convention offer the same protection for authors in all the member countries.³⁰ Second, this protection should not be conditional.³¹ Third, all countries follow the same protection regardless of other agreements of protection in the country, unless the country expands the degree of protection.³² Overall, the agreements in the minimum agree that it is in the exclusive right of the author to ‘translate, make adaptations and arrangements, perform, recite, communicate, broadcast, reproduce, and display’ their original text. Only the author can decide to license the work to someone else, such as a publisher.³³ Also, all authors have ‘moral rights’ under this convention. These moral rights refer to the ‘right to claim authorship of the work’ as well as disagree to certain reproductions or uses of their work that they believe to harm their image.³⁴ Additionally, it is now written in law that the author, if they haven’t sold their rights, remains the sole right holder to their original work for at least 50 years after

²⁷ ‘Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works’, *WIPO*, n.d. <<https://www.wipo.int/treaties/en/ip/berne/>>.

²⁸ M. van Bremen, and Thibodeau, D.J., ‘How and Why the U.S. Finally Joined the Berne International Copyright Convention’, *Leiden Journal of International Law*, 2 (1989), 1, p. 85.

²⁹ ‘Member States’, *WIPO*, n.d., <<https://www.wipo.int/members/en/>>.

³⁰ ‘Summary of The Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (1886)’, *WIPO*, n.d., <https://www.wipo.int/treaties/en/ip/berne/summary_berne.html>.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ ‘Author Rights Resources: Understanding Author Rights’, *Cornell University Library*, n.d. <<https://guides.library.cornell.edu/authorrights/knowyourrights>>.

³⁴ ‘Summary of The Berne Convention’, *WIPO*.

death.³⁵ After this period, the work moves into the public domain, anyone is allowed to adapt or re-use the text, but no one lawfully owns it beside the author.

Overall, this paragraph has shown that as conflict arises in the practice of authorship, changes take place, in this case referring to legal changes. These legal changes have constructed the ways in which we traditionally conceptualise the author in turn: as a writer who can make money from selling texts, who is the sole owner of this text, and whose writing should therefore be protected by law to protect the author in the process. However, the ways in which we experience and conceptualise authorship also reshapes legal agreements, as exemplified by Dickens' case. This shows that society and the practice of authorship interplay in creating our conceptualisation of authorship.

The Berne Convention also secured the path for the commercialization of text and therefore a source of income for the author. As a result of the new and changing agreements on the rights of the author, authors and publishing houses started working with structural forms of payment for authors: advances and royalties. In publishing, an advance is an amount of money the author receives upon signing the publishing contract for their work.³⁶ Royalties refer to an agreed-upon percentage of the money received from each copy of a title sold that is being transferred directly to the author.³⁷ The law therefore made sure that authorship could generally be considered a profession, as it now offered the possibility to provide an income, or part of an income, and therefore a means of living, rather than both functioning and being seen as a hobby. Moreover, we expect that the author is the owner of the text, and that they should receive fair payment from the publisher.

Because authors now create texts that one can sell and make profit from, authors sign a contract with the publisher to protect their rights. Not only to protect the author legally, but also emotionally, as authors are now commercialising their personal creations. This emotional connection authors have with their texts are often in conflict with the publisher. Namely, many publishers value text as a product that needs to sell well. Authors themselves can decide to work together with agents to help them maintain their rights and balance the power relation between them and the publisher. Not only do agents have extraordinary expertise on publishing houses to guide their author into finding a suitable publisher, which benefits both

³⁵ 'Author Rights Resources', *Cornell University Library*.

³⁶ 'Book Advances and Royalties', Penguin Random House, n.d. <<https://www.penguin.co.uk/articles/company-article/book-advances-and-royalties>>.

³⁷ Ibid.

the author and publisher, they also help the author with building fair contracts and maintaining their rights during and after the contract between publisher and author has been formed. Several publishing houses offer agency as well, but it is not uncommon for a starting author to not have an agent just yet.

Over time, many organisations have been established to help balance the power dynamic between the publisher and author, as well as protect the rights of the author. In 1884, ‘The Society of Authors’ (SoA) was established in the UK. This association offers continuous guidance, protection, and support for authors in performing their profession over time. For example, the SoA spoke out when author’s quotes were being misrepresented by publishers, often for a benefit in marketing.³⁸ This act of the publisher at times negatively affected the author’s reputation and image, and SoA criticised this act for being ‘morally questionable’.³⁹ Institutions like SoA are especially important with the change to the digital medium. Namely, the agreements written in The Berne Convention have last been updated in 1979, which means that the agreements have not yet been adapted current changes with the digital medium. Understandably, the change from a print to digital medium and change in product must therefore also ask for new legal agreements to guarantee the protection of the author. These new legal agreements will reshape the practice of the author, as well as our conceptualisation of the literary author.

1.2 The Relation between the Practice of the Author and the Publisher

The legal changes on the rights of the author also influenced the practice of publishing and the relation between the author and publisher. This thesis will primarily focus on the author, but it is important to understand that the practice of authorship and our conceptualisation of the author interplays with the practice of publishing. This thesis will focus on the traditional publisher in the UK, and mostly on big publishing houses, such as Puffin, as these have a significant influence on the authors we are reading today and therefore our conceptualisation of authorship. The publisher is key in the practice of authorship: it is the publisher that decides which texts will be published, and therefore in turn, which writers become

³⁸ E. Creamer, ‘Society of Authors Calls Use of Bad Reviews for Book Blurbs ‘Morally Questionable’, *The Guardian*, 1 September 2023 <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/sep/01/society-of-authors-calls-use-of-bad-reviews-for-book-blurbs-morally-questionable>>.

³⁹ Ibid.

professional authors.⁴⁰ Almost all literary publishers are businesses at their core: publishers aim to make profit by selling their products, which are texts. Therefore, the decisions they make are at most times also made because of financial reasons.

The publishing process in the print era has been of significant influence in constructing values that we traditionally associate with authorship. For example, the act of selecting certain texts gives the author a sense of originality and authority, as their texts were signified by publishers as good enough to invest money in. Additionally, the fact that these writers were being published, and other writers were not, gave both the author and the text a sense of authority, working both ways. Moreover, it brought values of ownership, originality, and individuality to authors, because published texts were creation from their minds only, and the text could not be changed without their agreement.⁴¹

This thesis will continuously refer to the hierarchy between the author, publisher, as well as the reader, and how the balance between these three parties affects our understanding of authorship. An understanding of the publisher's publication process will help clarify the relation between the author and publisher. To be specific, it will explain why the publisher makes certain decisions, and how these choices affect the author and the practice, and our conceptualisation of authorship in turn. To explain the relation between author and publisher, I will make use of Michael Bhaskar's framework on publishing titled 'The Content Machine'.⁴² He aims to clarify the publisher's role in society and its significant effect on society.⁴³ Bhaskar has identified several key actions in general publishing. He argues that these actions are always operating and of significant influence on the outcome of the product. These can be applied to literary publishing as well. In this case, Bhaskar's idea of the product refers to text in terms of the book, i.e. the shape of a codex, as this shape of text is most common in children's book publishing.

In short, Bhaskar identifies four key actions in publishing, which are *modelling*, *filtering*, *framing* and *amplification*. The realisation of these four actions depends significantly on the *contextual nexus*, by which he means the social, cultural, technological, political, and economic environment in which the publisher publishes a text. For example, the contextual

⁴⁰ 'Uitgeverij', *Algemeen letterkundig lexicon*, n.d.

<https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/dela012alge01_01/dela012alge01_01_03257.php#:~:text=Een%20uitgever%20zorgt%20voor%20het,ze%20op%20de%20markt%20brengt>.

⁴¹ Fitzpatrick, *Planned Obsolescence*, pp. 58, 76, 80.

⁴² Bhaskar, *The Content Machine*.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

nexus can differ per country, which results in the publishing of different types of texts. Moreover, he stresses the importance of the *public sphere*, or the reader in this case, which works bidirectionally. Namely, readers are of influence on what publishers will publish because they are the consumers and assign value to these products. However, published material is also of influence on what readers want to, or do not want to, be published. Overall, the text is a product for the publisher, and the publisher always aims to make the best profit or other benefice, such as prestige, out of this product. A schematic representation of his framework can be found in figure 1.

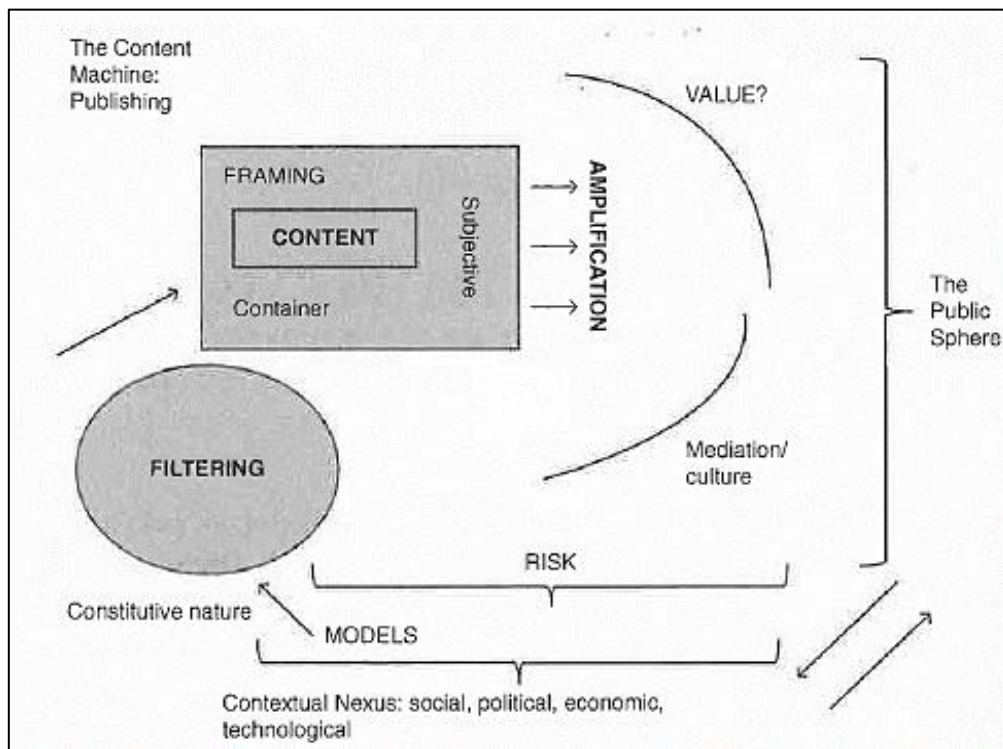


Figure 1: The Content Machine, M. Bhaskar, from *The Content Machine*, p. 168.

The first step that a publisher performs is filtering out which texts and authors they decide to publish and not to publish. By this step, the publisher already shows significant control over which writers we come to understand as authors, and which and what types of texts we read. In his later work, Bhaskar proposes that *curation* is a more suitable term than filtering for this process in publishing.⁴⁴ Bhaskar underscores that to curate their offers, publisher follows certain models that are usually unique to their publishing house. These models are significantly influenced by the contextual nexus of a publisher. A model could for example be focused on the maintaining of a certain prestige, authority, or religious and financial concern.⁴⁵ In children's books, a model could specify which topics are suitable to publish taking in account the children's age.

For big publishing houses, it could be risky to publish controversial texts as it might affect their prestige and in turn their financial profit. Therefore, as society is currently critical on topics such as diversity and inclusivity, publishers might decide to publish stories that are in line with the critique expressed in the public sphere to prevent financial loss or generate profit instead. This could explain why Puffin has decided to erase insulting language from Dahl's texts. As a result, these models also influence which writers and texts will or will not get published. These decisions therefore also directly influence the texts we read. Meaning that, these actions show that the publisher, as well as the reader, holds significant power in the practice of the publisher as well as that of the literary author.

Bhaskar notes that the two other key actions of the publishing process are the product's framing and amplification. By framing, Bhaskar refers to the way in which the text is shaped, such as digital or physical publication, its physical format, and the final version of the text. Again, this framing is influenced by the contextual nexus and public sphere. In what ways the public sphere and contextual nexus are of influence on the framing of a product can be exemplified by our current use of sensitivity readers. At the time Bhaskar published his conceptual model, publishing houses did not work together with sensitivity readers to this extent. As our current culture and public asks for more diverse and inclusive texts, publishers must take these points of critique into account in the ways they decide to frame the texts, to make sure their texts will continue to sell, and their prestige remains intact. For that reason, many publishing houses, especially in the USA but also Puffin in the UK, are collaborating

⁴⁴ Bhaskar, M., 'Curation in Publishing: Curatorial Paradigms, Filtering, and the Structure of Editorial Choice', in *The Oxford Handbook of Publishing*, ed. by A. Phillips and M. Bhaskar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 226-243.

⁴⁵ Bhaskar, *The Content Machine*, p. 153.

with sensitivity readers in their ways of framing texts to make sure the texts they are publishing are in line with the ideas on diversity and inclusivity. Overall, what the use of sensitivity readers shows is that the reader as well as the publisher has significant control over the texts and authors being published. Moreover, this power signifies not only that the publisher holds control over the physical outcome of the work, but also the ways in which we conceptualise literary authorship.

Eventually, a text will be amplified, by which Bhaskar means the way in which a text is marketed and eventually convinces the reader to buy the text. The type of amplification is dependent on technology and society, as well as the age of the consumer. Right now, many publishers could decide to market their children's books online via social media platforms. The way in which a text is marketed also affects the way in which both the author and the text are perceived. Currently, many publishers are also working with author-branding, a marketing strategy by which more focus is put on the author than on the text, most of the times because of the author's fame.⁴⁶ For example, publishers are collaborating with celebrities and influencers. Even so, a book interview on a talk show, or a short humorous video on social media, could present two different images of an author. The ways in which the publisher and author decide to market authors and books indirectly also influences the ways in which we conceptualise the author.

After publication and amplification, the public sphere, i.e. the reader, will assign a certain value to a text, and this in turn will influence what is being published. This gives the reader significant power in the publishing process. For example, if young adult books are becoming increasingly appreciated and popular, more publishing houses might start to publish young adult books as well. Similarly, as certain topics might receive more critique, fewer texts within these topics might be published. In that way, Bhaskar's framework eventually represents a circuit, as both the publisher and the public sphere are influencing what is being published. Therefore, the practice of the author and our conceptualisation of authorship interplays with the choices being made by the publisher.

As shown by Bhaskar, the publisher also values the author's text because of financial interest. However, the author often attributes different values to their work. For example, authors carry an emotional connection with their work as they have invested a lot of their time

⁴⁶ A. Baverstock, *How to Market Books: The Essential Guide to Maximizing Profit and Exploiting All Channels to Market* [4th Edition], ed. by Alison Baverstock, (London: Kogan Page, 2008), p. 59.

individually and the text is their original creation they are oftentimes proud of. This emotional connection authors have with their texts are often in conflict with the values of the publisher. The framework of Bhaskar therefore leaves room for analysis on the emotional connection between the publisher and author, and how this connection is influencing our conceptualisation of authorship. For example, the analysis of their practices, in what ways they rely on each other in the publishing process, how they work together and come to make decisions, and in which ways this divides or gives one or the other more power in the publishing process.

Overall, authors are generally proud of their text, and they wish that the text will be treated with its best care and purpose. To frame and amplify a text, the publisher and author must work closely together, in which the editor has become an increasingly more important figure in the process. There are various editing roles that differ per country. In the UK the author is mostly collaborating with the literary editor, who is concerned with the content of the text. The literary editor is a key figure in this process, as the editor and author usually work together extensively during the writing process, during the publication process and after publication. Nell Frizzells writes:

As well as nannying a novel into existence, the modern editor is also tasked with protecting the writer from some of the harshest commercial winds - building them a nest in which they can, hopefully, produce greatness. ('Beyond Cuts')

This bond between author and editor is also key for the publisher, as the publisher needs to offer adequate help and support, so that the author will write a text they can successfully publish and sell.

Especially with the digital medium, because the author and reader are more easily in contact via this medium. For example, critique spreads and reaches the author more easily online. Many authors might rethink their writing because they fear they will be 'cancelled' by the reader.⁴⁷ Therefore, even more pressure is put on what the author is writing and publishing, and the editor must guide and support the author through these moments. This shows that authors increasingly rely on the literary editor to guide them emotionally through the process as well. Lisa Kuitert highlights that often, editors also make sure to be the first to

⁴⁷ R. Jones, 'Sir Kazuo Ishiguro Warns of Young Authors Self-Censoring out of Fear', *BBC*, 1 March 2021 <<https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-56208347>>.

read critique on a story, so that they immediately contact their authors to emotionally support them.⁴⁸ In *The Guardian*, it is mentioned that ‘an editor may be butcher, but they are also a midwife, a parent, a nanny, a matron, a therapist, a conspirator and a friend’.⁴⁹ Therefore, editors also offer support by helping increase the author’s confidence about their text. Kuitert also notes that authors and editors create a relationship based on trust and that at times authors feel lost when they do not have their editor by their side.⁵⁰

This emotional bond that the author has with the editor shows to be significant, and we therefore see that there are many author-editor duo’s that have an extraordinary emotionally dependent relation that continue to work together even after the retirement of the editor. For example, the author Robert Caro and editor Robert Gottlieb have a significant emotional connection, as Caro believed no one else could perform the job the same way as Gottlieb did, and they have not left their sides for over fifty years.⁵¹ In contrast, Robert Gottlieb also edited works of Roald Dahl, but Gottlieb decided to discontinue working together with Roald Dahl because he disliked Dahl’s behaviour.⁵² Even so, this section has shown that our changing environment has constructed a dependent and significant relationship both emotionally and economically between the author and editor. This shows there is a grey area in publishing where the decisions made both by the publishing house or author are not always as black and white as simply making a text public and selling it, because there is also a lot of emotional pressure on the author influencing the practice.

This chapter has clarified in what ways The Berne Convention of 1886 and its ongoing legal agreements have had a part in shaping our traditional conceptualisation of the practice of the literary author and the moral and economic rights and values of the author. Additionally, Bhaskar’s model has clarified the continuous system of the publisher, the field in which the literary author currently operates, and the current power dynamic between the author, publisher, and reader. Overall, our traditional conceptualisations of authorship are rooted in

⁴⁸ L. Kuitert, *Over Redactie* (Amsterdam: Augustus, 2008), p. 66.

⁴⁹ N. Frizzell, ‘Beyond Cuts: the Many Roles of a Writer’s Editor’, *The Guardian*, 12 March 2014 <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2014/mar/12/writers-editors-eleanor-catton-booker-winner>>.

⁵⁰ Kuitert, *Over Redactie*, p. 77.

⁵¹ R. LeDonne, ‘Turn Every Page: A Peek into Robert Caro and Robert Gottlieb’s Long Creative Relationship’, *The Guardian*, 17 January 2023 <<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2023/jan/17/turn-every-page-documentary-robert-caro-robert-gottlieb-long-creative-relationship>>.

⁵² E. Temple, ‘When Roald Dahl’s Editor Decided He Was Too Much of A Prick To Publish’, *LitHub*, 13 September 2017 <<https://lithub.com/when-roald-dahls-editor-decided-he-was-too-much-of-a-prick-to-publish/>>.

the print era; we constructed authorship as a profession, and that the author is the owner of a work who holds legal, moral, and emotional rights. As society changes, so does the practice of the author in turn, which works bi-directionally, and by that shapes our conceptualisation of and attitudes towards authorship. Moreover, this chapter has shown that the publisher and reader hold significant power in the practice of the author and therefore our ideas on literary authorship.

Knowledge on the traditional practice of authorship, and the influence of the publisher on the practice and therefore conceptualisation of the author, will help clarify in what ways our values of literary authorship are being uprooted in the digital period. In what ways the digital medium takes part in our conceptualisation of and attitudes towards the author, will be analysed later in this thesis. First, it is important to explain in what ways our conceptualisation of text, and technology in general, take part in shaping our conceptualisation of literary authorship. Therefore, Chapter 2 explains in more detail the interplay between societal expectations, the practice and field of the literary authorship, and the medium and our conceptualisation of text. It will present an analysis of key theories within this area of research, that underpin Fitzpatrick's research. This chapter will also cover in more detail in what ways Fitzpatrick's conceptual framework operates. Additionally, it will cover why Fitzpatrick's framework is most suitable to explore in what ways the digital medium and digital text is reshaping our ideas on and attitudes towards literary authorship, and how this framework will be implemented to answer this question.

Chapter 2: Conceptualisations of Authorship

Kathleen Fitzpatrick conceptual framework shows in what ways the technological elements of the digital medium take part in reshaping our conceptualisation of and attitude towards scholarly authorship.⁵³ Her framework focuses on four key values in traditional scholarly authorship, namely originality, authority, individuality and ownership.⁵⁴ Even though her research is focused on scholarly authors, her framework offers suitable tools to investigate the relation between the digital medium and changing values in literary authorship as well. Eventually, her framework will be used to answer the research question: in what ways is the digital medium reshaping our conceptualisation of and attitudes towards literary authorship?

Authorship has been investigated by many in the last decade. Many of the arguments in these studies and essays underpin Fitzpatrick's way of thinking about authorship. An overview of this research will help understand in what ways Fitzpatrick's framework operates and the main line of thinking on authorship in this research. Overall, this thesis as well as Fitzpatrick underscores that our conceptualisation of authorship always interplays with other factors, such as the author's social and cultural environment; our conceptualisation of text in general; and the medium on which text is presented.

Therefore, this chapter will present an overview of relevant thought and debate on authorship. This chapter will present Roland Barthes' and Michel Foucault's theories on our conceptualisation of authorship executed in 20th century. Their research stresses the interplay between society and our conceptualisation of text in our conceptualisation of authorship.⁵⁵ This chapter will also present Marshall McLuhan's theory on the medium and its effect on our conceptualisation of a medium's product in general, such as text.⁵⁶ He theorises that mediums unintentionally steer different uses of its product as well as conceptualisations of this product. Adriaan van der Weel highlights the idea of what he identifies as medial bias, which is like the idea of McLuhan in that the medium shapes its message.⁵⁷ At last, this chapter will explain in what ways Fitzpatrick's framework operates and how her framework will be applied in this research. In the end, this overview will help clarify the line of thinking in this research on the

⁵³ Fitzpatrick, 'The Digital Future of Authorship'; Fitzpatrick, *Planned Obsolescence*.

⁵⁴ Fitzpatrick, 'The Digital Future of Authorship', pp. 8, 10, 15.

⁵⁵ R. Barthes, 'The Death of the Author' in *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana, 1977), pp. 142-148; M. Foucault, 'What is an Author?', in *Modernity and its Discontents*, edited by Steven B. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

⁵⁶ M. McLuhan, 'The Medium is the Message' in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), n.pag.

⁵⁷ Van der Weel, *Changing Our Textual Minds*.

relation between the practice of the literary author, society, medium, and text, on our conceptualisations of literary authorship.

2.1 *Research on Authorship, Medium, and Text*

In 1967, Roland Barthes published his well-known essay ‘The Death of the Author’.⁵⁸ In this essay, Barthes criticises the contemporary focus on the author in creating meaning of text. He argues that in his print era, too much dependency is placed on the character of the author to create definition from a text.⁵⁹ He asserts that the author has no other function than being an operator realising the text by writing the words.⁶⁰ He further explains this idea by asserting that the author ‘thinks, suffers, lives’ for the text, but only ‘exists before’ the text on a sort of linear timeline.⁶¹ Therefore, as soon as the text is finished, the author dies. Therefore, we should rely on the reader, because the reader is the only person who eventually makes meaning of text.

Moreover, Barthes argues that text is never original and should therefore not be equated with the author. He argues that author and text should be separated, because the text that the author writes is never original, but ‘a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture’.⁶² However, Michel Foucault states that it cannot be denied that the author is essential to make meaning of text.⁶³ Foucault argues that even though the ideas expressed in a text might not be original, the way a text is written is always unique to the author. Namely, he notes that each author carries a specific character of writing, such as use of adjectives or certain topics, which makes the author’s texts different from the texts of other authors.⁶⁴ In that way, an author’s text signifies unique characteristics that make them different from other texts and in that sense original.⁶⁵

Barthes and Foucault agree about one thing: that there is a relation between society and our conceptualisation of the author. Foucault stresses that the name of an author can function

⁵⁸ Barthes, ‘The Death of the Author’.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 147.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 145.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 145.

⁶² Ibid., p. 146.

⁶³ M. Foucault, ‘What is an Author?’, in *Modernity and its Discontents*, edited by Steven B. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

⁶⁴ Foucault, ‘What is an Author?’, p. 304.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 304.

as a carrier of status in his period of time.⁶⁶ As a result, the author can bring a sense of authority to text.⁶⁷ This way, texts can be compared, classified, and in that way related back to a specific author, that might also give text a sense of authority.⁶⁸ Barthes also highlights that the author is ‘a product of our society’, and as society continues to change, so will our conceptualisation of the author along with it.⁶⁹ Barthes for example also notes like Foucault that our society has been constructed in such a way that we assign authority to the author. Therefore, we try to find the author’s name, to make meaning of text. He highlights that in this society:

The *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person. (‘The Death of the Author’, 143)

Michel Foucault also expressed the importance of this interplay two years after Barthes’ publication.

What is relevant from Foucault’s findings in this thesis is the notion of the author-function that the author and text interplay; text shapes our conceptualisation of authorship, and the author shapes our conceptualisation of texts in return. He also clarifies this interplay by stating:

Nevertheless, these aspects of an individual, which we designate as an author (or which comprise an individual as an author), are projections, in terms always more or less psychological, of our way of handling texts: in the comparisons we make, the traits we extract as pertinent, the continuities we assign, or the exclusions we practice. In addition, all these operations vary according to the period and the form of discourse concerned. A ‘philosopher’ and a ‘poet’ are not constructed in the same manner; and the author of an eighteenth-century novel was formed differently from the modern novelist. (‘What is an Author?’, 307)

In this piece, Foucault already asserts that as the society and the form of text changes, so does our conceptualisation of the text and author. Foucault exemplifies this by noting the difference

⁶⁶ Foucault, ‘What is an Author?’, pp. 305-306.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 305.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 304.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 142.

between a poet and novelist. The novelist and poet both work with words and texts, but their form of text is different. This causes us to conceptualise two different types of authors. Foucault notes that the author is a product of society. Social and cultural environments change our society, and in that way our conceptualisation of both text and authorship, continuously interplaying the conceptualisations we have of both.

Foucault underscores that the form in which text is presented shapes our conceptualisation of the author. At the end of the 20th century, literary authors and readers were introduced to a different medium to publish and read their stories. Rather than focusing on text solely as Barthes and Foucault, McLuhan theorised that ‘it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action’.⁷⁰ He states in general that each medium generates a unique use of its product. Moreover, the way we use the medium also causes us to assign different conceptualisation of this product.⁷¹ As Foucault and Barthes have already shown in their theories, the conceptualisation of text influences our values and conceptualisation of authorship in return. McLuhan highlights that those different uses of a product, i.e. text, also create different conceptualisations.

His theory can also be applied to in what ways the digital medium shapes our conceptualisation of text. Rather than focusing on society and text like Barthes and Foucault, McLuhan argues that it is the medium that shapes our understandings in general, such as our conceptualisation of text. We can already experience that the print and digital medium create different uses of text. For example, digital text presents hyperlinks, which links and expands a text to other texts as well. The print medium does not allow for hyperlinking, and the reach of print texts are always limited to its codex shape. In that way, both mediums present text, but because of their technological properties, they both allow for different uses.

Adriaan van der Weel has also investigated a relation between the medium and our conceptualisations which identifies technology at the root. The implications of the change from a print to digital medium on society have not yet been thoroughly analysed. This occurrence can be explained, because technology precedes these conceptualisations: first, changes in technology take place and it is only after its implementation and use in society that we can study its unintended consequences on society and specific areas, such as our reading habits.⁷² Therefore, we can only now study how our values of authorship are changing

⁷⁰ McLuhan, ‘The Medium is the Message’, n.pag.

⁷¹ Ibid., n.pag.

⁷² Fitzpatrick, ‘The Digital Future of Authorship’, p. 4.

because of the digital medium. Van der Weel presents a technologically deterministic view on the construction of our conceptualisation of authorship, which follows that it is technology itself which directly reshapes our ways of thinking and therefore society.⁷³ More technologically deterministic, he notes that each medium is organised and structured in its own unique ways, i.e. a medial bias, which:

Predispose us to certain ways of thinking, and thus of seeing the world. What we know – what we can know – is to some extent determined by how we know it, i.e., the way mediums allow it to be organised and transmitted. (*Changing Our Textual Minds*, 13, 18)

In that sense, Van der Weel argues similar to McLuhan's theory that 'mediums, like language, have an influence on the way we think and, by extension, on society'.⁷⁴

Even though the findings of his theory are mostly circumstantial, Van der Weel presents that our attitude towards text is changing because of the change from a print to digital medium. Namely, our focus is shifting to shorter texts as a cause of different representation, organisation, and distribution of text on the digital medium.⁷⁵ Van der Weel refers to that online texts are generally shorter, such as blog posts, and we are continuously being redirected to other posts via hyperlinks. As this requires a shorter attention span, our brains also become accustomed to reading shorter texts.⁷⁶ Moreover, Van der Weel observes that 'that the way we construct knowledge, for instance, is rapidly becoming more social and more democratic'.⁷⁷ Therefore, our way of thinking about author's texts is also becoming more social and democratic. Van der Weel posits that the boundaries of texts have become unclear with the digital medium. As a result, the relation between author and reader also becomes unclear, constructing a 'more equal relationship'.⁷⁸ Overall, Van der Weel poses that 'the sociotechnical environment in which authors work strongly affects the nature and social position of their authorship'.⁷⁹

Kathleen Fitzpatrick does not deny this type of relation between the medium and text. Namely, in her research she also argues that certain technological elements of a medium predispose us to certain uses and therefore ways of thinking about text. For example, Van der

⁷³ 'Technological Determinism Theory', *University of Kentucky*.

⁷⁴ Van der Weel, *Changing our Textual Minds*, p. 17.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

⁷⁸ Van der Weel, 'Appropriation', p. 7.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Weel identifies that the digital medium conceptualises text as not discursive, democratic, and unstable.⁸⁰ Fitzpatrick notes that we conceptualise text in the print era as ‘fixed, complete, and stable’.⁸¹ Even so, Van der Weel argues that it is predominantly the medium which shapes our conceptualisation of text and therefore authorship. However, Kathleen Fitzpatrick’s states that ‘technologies and cultures are mutually determining and thus must evolve in concert’.⁸²

Both Van der Weel and Fitzpatrick individually argue that the different representation of text on the digital medium therefore also constructs a different conceptualisation of text in general. To clarify, in the print era, there was only one conceptualisation of text, because the only way we experienced text was on the print medium. Now, there are new presentation carriers for text, such as the laptop and smartphone for digital text. Moreover, all types of texts, such as novels, can be presented on all these different presentation carriers. Therefore, we do not tie specific types of texts to one carrier. We now experience that the print and digital medium are just two different ways to visualise the same product: text, which is combination of words and sentences. There is no clear difference between text on a print and digital medium, or whether presented in a formal or informal format, such as a research paper or a blog post. This understanding will help clarify why we are starting to treat all texts the same, whether print or digital.

Fitzpatrick argues like Foucault and Barthes that our conceptualisation of authorship is always interplaying with societal expectations. Unlike Barthes, Fitzpatrick is not interested in if a text should be considered “original”, or if we should still assign meaning and authority to the author. Instead, she questions in her research: ‘what does this death of the author bode for *ourselves as authors*?’.⁸³ Therefore, her research is focused on deconstructing why and in what ways our ideas on authorship are changing with the digital medium, to also identify what this means for the practice of current and future scholarly authorship. In short, Fitzpatrick underscores societal expectations, the practice of the author, publisher, as well as the medium, take a place in constructing our conceptualisation of the author. This line of thinking about how we conceptualise authorship will also be followed in this thesis.

⁸⁰ Van der Weel, *Changing our Textual Minds*, p. 201.

⁸¹ Fitzpatrick, ‘The Digital Future of Authorship’, p. 11.

⁸² Fitzpatrick, *Planned Obsolescence*, p. 53.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

2.2 Kathleen Fitzpatrick's Framework in This Thesis

Fitzpatrick presents a framework that identifies the technological differences between print and digital text. She identifies these differences to clarify in what exact ways the digital medium differs in its distribution and use of text compared to print. This way, she clarifies how exactly the digital medium is creating a different conceptualisation of text and scholarly authorship compared to print. Fitzpatrick posits that in the print era we conceptualised scholarly authorship with values of individuality, originality, ownership, and authority.⁸⁴ More specifically, her research shows that our construction of these values is an indirect influence of the interplay between the practice of the author, publisher, societal expectations, medium and text. Fitzpatrick's research is focused on the scholarly author, but her framework comes closest to analysing how our attitudes towards and conceptualisations of literary authorship are being reshaped by the digital medium. Overall, this thesis will follow Fitzpatrick's argument in that certain technological properties of the digital medium are taking part in the construction of our conceptualisation of authorship. Specifically, this thesis will analyse in what ways the values of individuality, originality, ownership, and authority, and in what ways these changes can be related back to the digital medium.

To be able to apply Fitzpatrick's framework to execute this research, it is important to clarify what conceptual framework she theorises and how this framework operates by which she has made her conclusions on our conceptualisation of scholarly authorship. Fitzpatrick has not used consistent terminology in her research. Therefore, I will propose certain adaptations in her use of terminology while explaining her framework. Overall, Fitzpatrick's framework on identifying how the technological properties of a medium influence our conception of authorship operates as follows: the digital mediums has certain *technological properties*, which she also calls *structural elements*, that provide different *features*, which she at times calls *tools*, such as the ability to comment on text.⁸⁵ She explains that these features of text construct perspectives, or as she calls, *effects*, on the *values*, or *facets*, of traditional authorship, which are individuality, originality, ownership, and authority.⁸⁶

As shown, Fitzpatrick's use of the terms is inconsistent and therefore it is at times hard to follow Fitzpatrick's line of thinking. Therefore, I have decided to change the name of two terms for the framework that Fitzpatrick has set up to make her framework more easily

⁸⁴ Fitzpatrick, *Planned Obsolescence*, pp. 57, 73.

⁸⁵ Fitzpatrick, 'The Digital Future of Authorship', p. 9.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

understandable. In this research, I will use the term *salient properties* to describe the technological properties of a medium. This term derived from Van der Weel's research.⁸⁷ He clarifies the concept of salient properties by saying that 'the development of technologies tends to be steered by inherent technological properties: their salient properties'.⁸⁸ The salient properties of the medium that presents text creates *affordances* of text, a term that Van Der Weel also uses, which replaces *features*, because the term affordances more prominently clarifies the use of the medium and text.⁸⁹ These affordances bring different *effects*, which remains the same term, on our construction of the *values* by which we conceptualise authorship.

This thesis and Fitzpatrick's framework are built on the notion that society, the practice of the author, the medium, and our conceptualisation of text, always interplay, and continue to influence our conceptualisation of authorship. It has already been identified in what ways the practice and field of the author has constructed our conceptualisation of authorship and which values traditionally have been assigned to authorship, namely values of ownership, individuality, originality, and authority. However, it has not yet been clarified in detail in what ways the print medium operates and how this shapes our traditional conceptualisation text and authorship. Similarly, it has not been explained in what ways the digital medium is reshaping our conceptualisation of text. A short analysis of this will help conclude in what ways the digital medium is reshaping our conceptualisation of, and attitudes towards, authorship. Fitzpatrick also identifies general different uses of the digital medium compared to print. I will present and analyse these uses throughout the next chapter.

Overall, Fitzpatrick notes that the technological properties of print text, in any form, allow print text to be conceptualised as '*fixed, complete, and stable*'.⁹⁰ Every text that is printed can be considered fixed, because this publication of text is the agreed-upon final version of the text itself. Fitzpatrick underscores that 'any text that comes into our hands, whether a book or a journal, is present in its entirety and will be consistent from copy to copy'.⁹¹ This fixity and stability is caused by a salient property of print text: the fact that the print publication does not allow for any changes to be made to that exact print text. An affordance of the text is that the reader, or author, can write annotations on the paper, but the original text that is being

⁸⁷ Van der Weel, *Changing Our Textual Minds*, p. 5.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 5.

⁸⁹ Van der Weel, 'Literary Authorship in the Digital Age', p. 225.

⁹⁰ Fitzpatrick, 'The Digital Future of Authorship', p. 11.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 10.

published can only be changed by the author's decision to edit and re-publish. Meaning that, one cannot simply erase or adapt a printed text immediately, and one also does not expect text is edited and republished at any time. Moreover, we do not expect that the author edits or reshapes texts at any time. Overall, there is no direct interactivity possible between the reader and the text because the salient properties of print text do not allow for this interactivity to happen. Therefore, we did not expect the author to interact with the reader in the print era. Fitzpatrick denotes that print text has a 'read-only structure'.⁹²

In the print era, a published text also constructs the notion of *completeness*. Fitzpatrick underscores that writing a text is about writing a product that should at one time be considered complete. Publishing a book is publishing something that is complete that can be considered a "work". Moreover, only when a text is published, can a text be considered a book, and in that sense be regarded as complete. As text does not necessarily changes, print text is also associated with *stability*. In society which only knew authorship in relation to print text, Dahl's stories were always expected to be the same after publication, unless a critical edition is published.

What this short analysis of print text shows is that the ways in which we conceptualise text can therefore also influence the ways we shape our values and conceptualisation of authorship. For example, because of the notion of completeness, stability, and fixity of print text, and the read-only structure of text, it was not expected that the author would rewrite and republish text at any time. This also constructed the author's value of individuality and ownership. Namely, the writing process was generally an individual activity. Additionally, authors believed to have a sense of ownership over their texts, as they were the sole contributor to this finished text. Additionally, they were the only ones who could decide on later changes of the text. Print text also constructed values of originality; text published by a traditional publisher was expected to be original. As a result of the originality of text, as well as the individual creation and ownership, authors also created a value of authority that became key to the literary practice. How these four values interplay will be dealt with more thoroughly in the next chapter. Overall, as a cause of the print medium and print text, authors associated these values with the practice of authorship.

Right now, our conceptualisations and values of these four values in authorship present a different shape. This analysis of in what ways the digital medium differs in their salient

⁹² Fitzpatrick, 'The Digital Future of Authorship', p. 10.

properties apart from print, will help analyse in what ways the digital medium is of influence on our conceptualisation of text. In contrast to print text, the salient properties of digital text generally cause text to be considered *fluid*, *open*, *instable*, and *non-linear*. With fluidity, Fitzpatrick means that digital text can always be reshaped. For example, posts written on social media can usually be altered or deleted. In that sense, texts remain open, instable, and non-linear. Fitzpatrick has identified three main affordances of digital text, namely *linking*, *commenting* and *versioning*.⁹³ Via the technological property of hyperlinking, authors can link their work with for example other works, information, or websites. This way, the writing process of text and text itself also becomes non-linear, because the end of a story is not clear when one uses hyperlinks. By the affordance versioning, Fitzpatrick refers to the possibility of digital texts to work with different versions that can be published at any time. The digital medium also allows for the affordance of commenting, and in that way, an interactive reader-author relationship. These affordances create a 'read-write structure' as opposed to the read-only structure of print text.⁹⁴

Overall, the affordances of the digital medium are vastly different from the affordances of the print medium. In short, the digital medium has different salient properties, and therefore creates different affordances of its medium and text, compared to the print medium, which reshapes our conceptualisation of text from stable, closed, fixed, and linear, to unstable, incomplete, fluid, open, and non-linear. It is the focus of analysis in this thesis in of what ways these affordances of the digital medium are creating different effects on the traditional values of authorship and shaping our conceptualisation of authorship. Fitzpatrick's framework is most suitable to investigate in what ways our conceptualisation of and attitudes towards authorship are changing because of the digital medium. It has already been clarified in the first chapter of this thesis that the practice of the author interplays with societal expectations and the practice of the publisher. These elements interplay with and influence the practice the author, and so our conceptualisation of authorship. Next to this, Fitzpatrick's research clarifies that our conceptualisation of and attitudes towards authorship is always being influenced by the interplay with our conceptualisation of text and the medium.

To summarise, her framework works in showing that the specific salient properties of the medium that presents text creates different affordances of text and medium, which in turn shapes different effects on the way we construct our values by which we conceptualise and

⁹³ Fitzpatrick, 'The Digital Future of Authorship', p. 9.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 16.

treat authorship. In traditional authorship, four values resulted from our use of text on a print medium, creating values on ownership, individuality, originality, and authority. Currently, the debate on the editing of Dahl's texts shows that different conceptualisation of and attitudes towards authorship exist today with regards to ideas on ownership, originality, authority, and individuality, which are clashing with traditional conceptualisation of and attitudes towards authorship. To understand in what ways the digital medium is reshaping our conceptualisation of authorship that is co-existing and conflicting with our conceptualisation of traditional authorship, the following chapter will present an analysis of these four values with the help of Fitzpatrick's conceptual framework.

Chapter 3: Reshaping Values of Individuality, Originality, Ownership, and Authority in Literary Authorship and The Digital Medium

In the print era, literary authorship was conceptualised by the following values: individuality, originality, ownership, and authority. I will term these as the “traditional values”, “traditional conceptualisation”, and “traditional authorship”. The editing of texts post-mortem shows that these four values and our ideas on authorship are being uprooted. This chapter will aim to define what exactly is changing right now in our conceptualisation of and attitude towards the author, and in what ways the digital medium and digitisation of text is taking part in these changes.

To execute this research, this chapter is built on Fitzpatrick’s framework as defined in the previous chapter. It is considered likely in this research that our uses of the digital medium and its representations of text can reshape our ideas of and attitudes towards concepts such as literary authorship. The previous two chapters clarify that the practice of the literary author and our conceptualisation of the literary author are influenced by an interplay between society, the practice of the publisher, the medium, and our conceptualisation of text on the medium. Fitzpatrick theorises that the salient properties of the digital medium allow for other affordances than the print medium. This therefore results in a different conceptualisation of text, i.e. a new mentality towards text, as well as our understanding of scholarly authorship.

Key to this research is also that the hierarchy between author and reader is becoming more equal and we conceptualise all texts as the same; text on a print medium is not different from text on a digital carrier. Therefore, our mindset on informal texts, such as blogposts, also shift to formal texts, such as published print texts. Overall, Fitzpatrick’s framework presents that digital text introduces a new textual mentality. This new mentality conceptualises texts as fluid and open, centred on versioning, and generates a read-write structure of text.

In this chapter, each value of traditional authorship is analysed separately. Each section will form a picture of the changing conceptualisations of and attitudes toward traditional authorship. Key to this research is the question: in what ways can our new conceptualisations of and attitudes towards authorship be related back to the digital medium and our new mindset on text? Throughout this research, Dahl’s case will be presented in relation to the findings, because his case, the editing of children’s texts post-mortem, for a significant part exemplifies how the author’s values are being uprooted right now.

3.1 Individuality

The author's individuality is the first of Fitzpatrick's four key values that defines traditional authorship. Fitzpatrick notes that closedness of the book only allowed and afforded a read-only relation between author and reader.⁹⁵ This meant that there was no expectation the author would face collaboration with the reader; text was fixed after publication, and therefore the text was considered the final product of an individual writing process. The laws on author's rights also constructed the traditional value of individuality, by assigning the author as the sole individual in legal ownership over the text. As a result, the practice of the author in the print era created the traditional value of individuality.⁹⁶ This section is focused on individuality in the author's writing process, such as the author's value of individual creation of plots and characters.

The affordances of the digital medium now create a read-write structure between reader and text, and by that introduce collaboration to the practice of the author. Right now, the digital medium is offering room for a remix culture. In remix culture, readers are editing and reusing published texts to create new texts. These texts are also defined as derivative or 'transtext', which describes a text that builds on a published story and transmitted via media.⁹⁷ An example of a transtext is fanfiction. In fanfiction, readers are appropriating and repurposing the ideas and characters of author's texts into their own stories. For example, a creator on Wattpad named Joplinslilbaby has repurposed the plot and characters of Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* to write an adaptation on the story in which there is secretly a sixth golden ticket winner.⁹⁸ Transtexts show that the reader-author relation becomes interactive, as the reader becomes an active consumer, creating the 'prosumer'.⁹⁹

Fitzpatrick highlights that re-using other's texts result in 'fear of loss of individuality' in the practice of the author.¹⁰⁰ In fiction, there are authors who highly value their individual emotional connection with their stories. Authors now must get used to the idea that when they decide to write and publish a text, this no longer means they will be the only individuals

⁹⁵ Fitzpatrick, 'The Digital Future of Authorship', pp. 11, 16.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 14.

⁹⁷ H. Jenkins, 'Do Fans Generate Transtexts?: An Interview with Benjamin Derhy Kurtz and Mélanie Bourdaa (Part One)', *Pop Junctions*, January 26, 2017 <<https://henryjenkins.org/blog/2017/01/do-fans-generate-transtexts-an-interview-with-benjamin-derhy-kurtz-and-melanie-bourdaa-part-one.html>>.

⁹⁸ R. Dahl, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1964); @joplinslilbaby, 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory...', *Wattpad*, <<https://www.wattpad.com/story/317211057-charlie-and-the-chocolate-factory-male-oc-insert>>.

⁹⁹ Van der Weel, *Changing our Textual Minds*, p. 223.

¹⁰⁰ Fitzpatrick, 'The Digital Future of Authorship', p. 8.

writing about the worlds and characters they have created. This already generates fear in authors such as Diana Gabaldon, author of the *Outlander* series. She finds it troubling that there are now readers repurposing and sharing her worlds and characters in a totally different light she never wanted the characters to be in, such as an erotic environment. Therefore, Gabaldon has expressed her opinion on fanfiction on her blog, which has now been erased but has been republished on various websites.¹⁰¹ She criticises the writing of fanfiction, because her characters are often based on people she knows personally. Therefore, fans firstly should morally not appropriate her texts, and secondly, cannot adapt in such a way that it similarly reflects her personal experience. Therefore, Gabaldon does not wish those personally familiar characters to be presented in any other way.¹⁰²

Not only Gabaldon, but also Anne Rice criticised fanfiction during her time of living. She mentions on her website:

It upsets me terribly to even think about fan fiction with my characters. I advise my readers to write your own original stories with your own characters. It is absolutely essential that you respect my wishes. ('Anne's Messages to Fans')

Rice also contacted her lawyers, who sent an official statement to *Fanfiction.net* in which they demanded all fanfiction on Rice's stories to be taken down.¹⁰³ Both Gabaldon and Rice have tried to assert control over the representation of their original characters, but fans have continued to write fanfictions.¹⁰⁴ Such a statement highlights that there are authors who now fear a loss of individuality in the writing of texts, as well as the increasing control of the reader in the author-reader hierarchy. Currently, Gabaldon's statements have been removed from her website. This decision could mean that she has either embraced fanfiction or has accepted that she cannot control the publishing of fanfiction. Even so, it marks a significant change in our attitude towards authorship. The practice of literary authorship is becoming collaborative, and Gabaldon's and Rice's cases show that the traditional value of individuality

¹⁰¹ M. Jacobs, 'Approve or Disapprove: What 8 Famous Authors Think of Fanfiction', *Winter is Coming*, 4 July 2021 <<https://winteriscoming.net/2021/07/04/8-famous-authors-think-fanfiction-george-rr-martin-anne-rice-jrr-tolkien/2/>>; 'Diana Gabaldon's Official Fan-Fiction Policy', *Outlandish Observations*, 5 May 2010 <<https://www.outlandishobservations.com/2010/05/diana-gabaldons-official-fan-fiction.html>>.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ @Jekkal, 'Corporate Bandwagon, Issue 8', *Corporate Bandwagon*, 31 May 2001 <<https://web.archive.org/web/20010609233505/http://www.fanfiction.net:80/index.fic?action=column-read&columnEntryID=417>>.

¹⁰⁴ 'Outlander series', *FanFiction*, n.d. <<https://www.fanfiction.net/tv/Outlander/>>;

in literary authorship is being uprooted. Additionally, as fans continue to write fanfiction, readers now operate under the notion that they are allowed to collaborate with texts.

Aside from Gabaldon's and Rice's opinion, fanfiction has generally become tolerated because the fanfiction community usually operates under certain ethics. For example, fanfiction authors should not present ideas as their own, when they are originally from an author. However, there are cases where fanfiction writers did not comply to these ethics. For example, Erika Leonard James, author of the well-known *Fifty Shades* series, originally repurposed the characters Bella Swan and Edward Cullen from the *Twilight* series written by Stephanie Meyer, to write the story we now know as *Fifty Shades of Grey*.¹⁰⁵ After this fanfiction received success online, James adapted the story with made-up characters to erase the connection with *Twilight*, and published her work via a fan-made publishing house called Writer's Coffee Shop, and her series became a well-known success.¹⁰⁶

Surprisingly, not Meyer, but many *Twilight* fans criticise James' publication of the text, as well as the existence of this fan-made publisher. They state that James has betrayed Meyer's trust and disrespected her in two ways. Firstly, by repurposing original ideas and publishing this as so-called new original work. Secondly, by taking advantage of Meyer's fanbase to become a successful author herself.¹⁰⁷ In a similar case of reproduction, J.K. Rowling sued Harry Potter-fan Steve Vander Ark who wanted to publish a *Harry Potter* encyclopaedia, and Rowling felt 'I troubled' by the existence of this book.¹⁰⁸

These cases of the repurposing of author's original texts show that the reader's behaviour towards the author and published text is changing. Namely, readers are collaborating with original texts and repurposing these to make new texts, at times even infringing their copyright. More importantly, there are contradicting values between readers when it comes to repurposing's authors ideas and then publishing this fanfiction. Even so, increasingly more readers now experience that they are allowed to repurpose and publish author's original stories. The writing and publishing of fanfiction is reflected on existing

¹⁰⁵ Hayley C. Cuccinello, 'Fifty Shades of Green: How Fanfiction Went From Dirty Little Secret To Money Machine', *Forbes*, 10 February 2017 <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/hayleycuccinello/2017/02/10/fifty-shades-of-green-how-fanfiction-went-from-dirty-little-secret-to-money-machine/>>.

¹⁰⁶ Cuccinello, 'Fifty Shades of Green'.

¹⁰⁷ B. Jones, 'Fifty Shades of Exploitation: Fan Labor and *Fifty Shades of Grey*', in *Fandom and/as Labor*, ed. by Mel Stanfill and Megan Condis, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, 15 (2014) <<https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0501>>.

¹⁰⁸ 'Rowling in Court to Fight Fan's Potter Encyclopedia', *The Guardian*, 14 April 2008 <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/apr/14/usa.law>>.

writing, such as Rowling, but also Dahl. Fanfiction shows that there is less care for the author's value of individuality. Moreover, the hierarchy between the author and reader is changing. Readers are becoming prosumers who expect to have an active role or say in the creation or adaptation of stories that are not originally theirs.

This increasing power and control of the reader in literary authorship can be traced back to the digital medium. Fitzpatrick highlights that the function of the digital medium in scholarly writing is centred on the sharing of information, rather than the author. This focus on the sharing of information can also be seen in general on the digital medium.¹⁰⁹ Namely, because of the salient properties of the digital medium, texts are more easily connected, for example via the use of hyperlinks, which can link one blog text to a Facebook post, and to a news article in return. At the same time, these texts can be edited and republished any time. Moreover, the digital medium affords this new mentality by allowing the existence of writing platforms such as Wattpad. Van der Weel argues that 'once made public, a text ceases to be under the author's control is not an issue to the digital mind'.¹¹⁰ The reader is now more focused on the text, rather than what repurposing and sharing fanfiction might mean for the author's value of individuality. The writing of fanfiction does not mean we do not value the author in general anymore. Even more so, it could argue the opposite instead; we value authors and their original works to such a degree that we want to continue their stories via writing fanfiction. Even so, the digital medium creates the mindset that we can repurpose and edit texts any time.

The fear of authors losing their individuality can also be exemplified by Puffin's decision to edit texts post-mortem to reflect society's wishes on diversity and inclusivity in texts. Of course, print texts could also be edited, but this would happen in agreement with the author. Dahl's case exemplifies that it is now happening without the agreement of the author. With regards to fanfiction, everyone knows that the text is an adaptation made by a fan, rather than a new creation from the original author's mind. However, Puffin is now directly breaking into the original texts. They are taking the collaboration between author, publisher, and reader, one step further than fanfiction. At first, Puffin decided to discontinue the publication of Dahl's original texts and wanted to publish only the edited versions. Later, as a response to critique from readers, authors, and other publishers, Puffin eventually decided to continue to publish Dahl's original texts alongside the edited versions, leaving it up to the reader which

¹⁰⁹ Fitzpatrick, 'The Digital Future of Authorship', p. 6.

¹¹⁰ Van der Weel, 'Literary Authorship in the Digital Age', p. 229.

texts they will be reading.¹¹¹ Even so, what this instance shows is that publishers now see significantly more importance in adapting text to society's demands, instead of the practice's value of individual creation. The author itself, as well as the author's value of individuality in writing, is generally being pushed to the background, and our focus has centred more on the demands of the reader.

The decision to edit author's texts post-mortem can be traced back to our new mentality on text that centralises and values versioning, rather than fixity. For example, the salient properties of the digital medium allow the user to edit published texts at any time. Published posts on social media such as Instagram can always be altered or deleted. Also, when newspapers makes an informational mistake in their online news articles, readers can notify the newspaper which often edits the text. This openness of text, next to the prosumer, is creating a mindset on text in which the reader expects in general that texts can be edited or that new versions can be made when they demand. In turn, this creates a new idea of text in that it is always in a state of process rather than fixed. Overall, this irregular and disruptive use of text is transferred to the expectation that we can edit and repurpose published texts as well. Apparently, it does not matter whether these texts were published in this time or under the ideas and practice of traditional authorship. Namely, we can now see that we are treating all texts as the same, whether written online or by Dahl.

The fact that practice of authorship is increasingly collaborative in remix culture, raises the question whether we should not start to adapt our views on the value of individuality in literary authorship. Fitzpatrick underscores the potential of collaboration, but her research is focused on scholarly research, which means that researchers should not necessarily fear collaboration as it might be helpful to execute research in a particular field. The relation between the literary author and reader is different, as readers are now repurposing ideas of authors who valued their ownership. Even so, there are authors who have already tried to embrace collaboration with the reader.

An instance in which this has already happened, is when J.K. Rowling decided to write a theatre sequel to the *Harry Potter* series titled *Harry Potter and The Cursed Child*, after continuously expressed desire by fans to continue her *Harry Potter* story.¹¹² Generally,

¹¹¹ 'Puffin Announces The Roald Dahl Classic Collection to Keep Author's Classic Texts in Print', *Penguin*, n.d. <<https://www.penguin.co.uk/articles/company-article/puffin-announces-the-roald-dahl-classic-collection-to-keep-authors-classic-texts-in-print>>.

¹¹² J.K. Rowling, J. Tiffany and J. Thorne, *Harry Potter and The Cursed Child* (London: Little, Brown, 2016).

this sequel was received with much appraisal. However, the reviews of this sequel were contradicting. Next to that there are mostly lovers of the story, there was a small group of readers on online communities who saw this book as a collaboration between reader and author that almost resembled a fanfiction, rather than a unique story of Rowling's mind.¹¹³ This critique shows that this group of readers valued the *Harry Potter* series because of Rowling's individual as well as original creation. It shows that even though collaboration might be successful, the original author still receives a special status because their writing is considered unique and cannot be replicated to the same extent. Even so, Rowling's acceptance of this intellectual collaboration with the reader, shows that the collaboration is presenting potential and at the same time still finding shape for current and future authors.

In short, because of the affordances of the digital medium and text, we now look differently at the relation between the author and reader; namely, that we are allowed to collaborate with texts, as well as expect to edit published texts. Overall, by the use of sensitivity readers in publishing we can see that the publishers treats the demands and values of the reader as more important than the values of the author. Especially in a society in where critique is vast, and the publisher must adapt their publishing system to this critique to continue to sell texts. With regards to the author, this means that their original works, aside from critique and revised author rights, cannot guarantee the same degree of individuality as was the case in traditional authorship. Editing texts of a deceased author do not only affect the author's traditional value of individuality. Additionally, it raises questions on the relation between the traditional value of originality and the current practice of literary authorship as well. Namely, the post-mortem editing of authors' texts raises questions on the goal of literary authorship and the importance of originality in literary texts. Therefore, the next section will present an analysis of in what ways the digital medium is affecting our attitudes towards and use of text and the author's value of originality in turn.

3.2 Originality

Originality and individuality are two values that interplay: the original text, and the originality of the text, are linked to the author's individual hand, creativity, and mind. The previous section analysed the author's personal value of individuality in the writing process. This

¹¹³ 'Why do People Say *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* Seems Like Bad Fanfiction?', *Quora*, 2021
<<https://www.quora.com/Why-do-people-say-Harry-Potter-and-the-Cursed-Child-seems-like-bad-fanfiction>>.

section will focus on the author's value that traditional literary authorship is about publishing original texts. As shown by Barthes and Foucault, the definition of originality is debated. This thesis will follow an understanding of originality that 'in contemporary usage an "author" is an individual who is exclusively responsible for the production of a unique, original work', and 'all literature possesses part of its author, and therefore is original'.¹¹⁴ This means that the text always represents ideas, as well as language characteristics, from of a particular individual's mind and creativity. It also marks the text as an original contribution which can be related back to the direct ownership of the author.

The practice of traditional authorship and the print medium created the value of originality. Namely, writing is generally considered a form of art in which authors are allowed an expression of artistic freedom offering room for originality. By publication and law, it was recognised that the author's text was original. Overall, this recognition of originality became valued by the author because it also constructing a value of authority, which will be dealt with in the last section. The fixity of print also guarded the original state of the work; the author expected its text to remain in its original state after publication, unless otherwise agreed.¹¹⁵ This section will show the ways in which ways the digital medium is taking part in our reshaping ideas of and attitudes toward originality in literary authorship. To be specific, this section is focused on the author's value of publishing original texts in the practice.

The use of author-branding by traditional publishers raises the question to what extent it is still relevant to be original as an author. Many publishers are collaborating with famous people such as actors, professional athletes, singers, as well as influencers, to create texts and sell texts. Because social media platforms allow for commenting, interaction is taking place, fandoms are built and grown, and eventually the people behind these accounts become online celebrities we identify as influencers with so-called social capital.¹¹⁶ Publishers can be tempted to collaborate with these influencers because their social capital guarantees sales. There are many famous people who have now written a children's book, and this is not surprising considering it is a successful marketing strategy. For example, Meghan Markle and

¹¹⁴ S. Donovan, D. Fjellestad and R. Lunden, 'Introduction: Author, Authorship, Authority, and Other Matters', in *Authority Matters: Rethinking the Theory and Practice of Authorship*, ed. S. Donovan, D. Fjellestad and R. Lunden (Brill: Leiden/Boston, 2008), p. 1; L. Rieders, 'Borrowing and Originality in Modern Authorship', *The Lehigh Review*, 15 (2007), p. 10.

¹¹⁵ Fitzpatrick, *Planned Obsolescence*, p. 67.

¹¹⁶ M. Ramdarshan Bold, 'The Return of the Social Author: Negotiating Authority and Influence on Wattpad', *Convergence*, 24, 4 (2016), p. 120.

Ricky Gervais have both published a children's book at big publishing houses.¹¹⁷ It remains debatable whether the success of these sales can be traced back to the fame of these authors, or the originality and quality of their texts. For example, reviews of Meghan Markle's *The Bench* state that the story is 'bad' and has 'awful rhyme'.¹¹⁸

Therefore, the use of author-branding in publishing creates outrage from contemporary authors who assert that celebrity authors affect the value of originality in the practice. Critics of celebrities turning authors emphasises that in the practice, the author's name on a novel signifies that the author is 'staking a claim to an act of skill, imagination and perseverance that even the world's most successful writers admit is tough'.¹¹⁹ However, celebrities have often used ghost writers, and their sales can be traced back to their fame instead of their skill. Amber Gwynne asserts that 'celebrity novels remind us books always occupy an uneasy position as both artistic creation and commodity'.¹²⁰ Amanda Craig experiences celebrity authors as a threat to the field of children's book publishing. She exclaims:

Where I draw a line in the sand is at this idea that children's books are there for people like Simon Cowell or Madonna as an extra way of making more money. [...] The real evil of this is they have no talent, yet they mop up a publisher's marketing budget and they crowd out the good stuff. This field, which was once really important, is being swamped by people who think they'll be as rich as Rowling. ('Famous First Words')

As a result, journalists offer critique that it is capitalism by which publishers operate, rather than publishing texts because these texts are original and interesting of themselves.¹²¹

This critique from authors and journalists shows that the current increasing use of author-branding in the publishing industry affects the author's traditional value of originality. Authors now experience that their professional practice is not necessarily about writing

¹¹⁷ M. Markle, *The Bench* (New York: Random House Children's Books, 2021); R. Gervais, *Flanimals* (London: Faber and Faber, 2004).

¹¹⁸ A., Larman, 'Duchess of Platitudes', *The Critic*, 12 June 2021 <<https://thecritic.co.uk/duchess-of-platitudes/>>; R. Boland, 'Meghan Markle Has Written a Children's Book. It's Awful', *The Irish Times*, 9 June 2021 <<https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/meghan-markle-has-written-a-children-s-book-it-s-awful-1.4588508>>.

¹¹⁹ A. Gwynne, 'Millie Bobby Brown's Debut Novel is a Bestseller. Does it Matter that the 19-Year-Old Actor Didn't Write It?', *The Conversation*, 26 September 2023 <<https://theconversation.com/millie-bobby-browns-debut-novel-is-a-bestseller-does-it-matter-that-the-19-year-old-actor-didnt-write-it-214258>>.

¹²⁰ Gwynne, 'Millie Bobby Brown'.

¹²¹ M. Burrows, 'Editing Roald Dahl Isn't 'Woke'. It's Capitalism', *Big Issue*, 20 February 2023 <<https://www.bigissue.com/culture/books/editing-roald-dahl-isnt-woke-its-capitalism/>>.

original and inspiring texts anymore. Rather, big publishers are much more focused on the demands of the reader. Namely, as the reader might be tempted to buy these types of texts, publishers will likely collaborate more often with celebrities. Sophie Rochester emphasises that now, ‘readers and writers are gathering in online communities and could be construed as being the new gatekeepers of fiction’.¹²² As a result, it is raising the question to what extent it remains important to produce original and creative writing in the practice of literary authorship. With regards to the case of Dahl, one could question whether Puffin and Dahl’s reader care more for his original writing, or his image.

Even so, social capital and author-branding also open doors for new ways to enter the traditional publishing industry as an unpublished writer. As fans and readers have a significant influence on who is getting published, new types of writers emerge which Lyle Skains terms as the ‘demotic author’.¹²³ This type of writer is now playing into the marketing strategy of author-branding. Instead of first writing and publishing a book which results in a fanbase, demotic authors first deliberately acquire a fanbase, i.e. social capital, to make them attractive to a publisher. This way they aim to have their story published in the end, and in that way becoming a professional author. These instances of author-branding and the demotic author show that the socio-technology of the digital medium is uprooting the traditional value of originality in the practice of the author. Rather than that publishing centres on original writing, publishing is now becoming increasingly more centred on publishing well-known people, as well as best-selling authors, instead. As elaborated in Chapter 1, publishing is key to our general understanding of professional authorship. Namely, because of publishing, we come to understand writers and authors, and authorship as a professional practice as well. Lyle Skains underscores that our way of becoming an author, and our views on how to become an author, are shifting.¹²⁴ The use of author-branding affects the notion and value of the author, in that their practice does not solely centre around, and they are not necessarily valued because of, writing specifically original and interesting texts.

Melanie Ramdarshan Bold highlights that these new ways of entering traditional publishing, such as acquiring social capital and writing fanfiction, is also offering more room

¹²² S. Rochester, ‘Telling Stories or Selling Stories: Writing for Pleasure, Writing for Art, or Writing to Get Paid?’, in *Whose Book is it Anyway?: a View from Elsewhere on Publishing, Copyright and Creativity*, ed by. Janis Jefferies and Sarah Kember (Cambridge UK: Open Book Publishers, 2019), p. 132.

¹²³ R.L. Skains, *Digital Authorship: Publishing in the Attention Economy*, ed. by Samatha Rayne and Rebecca Lyons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 2-3.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-10.

for artistic freedom and originality in traditional publishing. Bold underscores that because of the digital, forms of self-publishing such as fanfiction, democratises text and by that everyone can spread knowledge, generating mass-authorship. She notes that, this way, ‘traditional publishers are no longer the sole gatekeepers of culture’.¹²⁵ Where traditional publishers are limiting the authors in their artistic freedom, fanfiction platforms offer room for a new type of author that can still be innovative in their writing, because they do not have to follow society’s conventions to present diversity and inclusivity in writing.¹²⁶ Taking in mind the case of E.L. James and the notion of the demotic authors, these unpublished authors would be able to enter the traditional publishing field eventually as well. Even though the publisher’s decision to publish these texts would most likely be financially motivated, it would be a way for the author to control a notion of artistic freedom and originality in the professional practice of literary authorship.

The case of Dahl exemplifies that the publisher has different values on the dynamics between originality and profit. For example, over time, Dahl has created a world-wide fanbase around his texts. Even though Dahl is a well-known author, society is still critical of diversity and inclusivity. Therefore, it could be argued that because of Dahl’s fame and enormous and world-wide fandom, and because he has written his stories for children, his texts therefore receive an even more critical eye. Even so, Dahl is a big name in the children’s book industry, as well as society. Therefore, profit operating the publishing industry, and the demands of the reader, as well as our new mindset on text, explains that Puffin’s attention shifted towards the editing of Dahl’s texts, instead of discontinuing the publication of his texts.

However, the case of Dahl and the use of sensitivity readers raises the question for authors to what extent the practice of authorship is still centred on artistic freedom and originality. In the debate on Dahl, it is highlighted that writing is a form of art, and ‘artists have a right to the creative integrity of their work, even when the work is disagreeable’.¹²⁷ The fact that publishers are editing the works of authors, and readers are buying these edited texts, shows that publishers and readers now think differently of art in that it should be ‘be

¹²⁵ Ramdarshan Bold, ‘The Return of the Social’, p. 119.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

¹²⁷ L. Chilton, ‘Censoring Roald Dahl and Ian Fleming Has Nothing To Do With ‘Sensitivity’’, *Independent*, 28 February 2023 <<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/james-bond-censored-offensive-roald-dahl-b2290856.html>>.

morally upright and unproblematic’, rather than challenging us and provoking thoughts and debates.¹²⁸ Imogen West-Knights underscores that:

It would be naive to deny that a possible motive for publishers to have sensitivity reads done on books is to avoid negative public reaction to what is, at the end of the day, a product they are trying to sell. (‘Roald Dahl, Rewrites’)

Author Ian McEwan has spoken out and says that sensitivity readers:

Represent the death of the novel. Once you remove any possibility of a piece of fiction being difficult or challenging in any sense, you remove its ability to change the world. (‘Ian McEwan is Right’)

Editing post-mortem and the use of sensitivity readers is therefore interpreted by many as a form of censorship. This infringement on artistic freedom in literary writing is creating fear amongst authors that if they do not abide to the wishes of the reader and publisher, they might either not be published, or eventually fall victim to cancel-culture.¹²⁹

Therefore, many writers might take diversity and inclusivity in mind beforehand, so that they will prevent critique from the publisher and reader.¹³⁰ Anthony Horowitz states that ‘literature is being terrorised’ by sensitivity reading, and that ‘we should not be made to do things because we’re so scared of starting a storm on Twitter’.¹³¹ Online fora and the resulting demanding reader is currently reshaping the practice of literary authorship in such a way that it negatively affects the author’s traditional value of originality. Overall, the practice of the author is affected by the practice of the publisher, which is significantly being controlled by a reader who can effectively push their demands into the publishing system via the digital medium.

Even so, the question remains to what extent we can continue to relate literary authorship and originality. First, because we are now experiencing a practice of authorship in

¹²⁸ Chilton, ‘Censoring Roald Dahl’.

¹²⁹ N. Tyrone, ‘Literature Is Being Terrorised by Cancel Culture’, *Spiked*, 13 May 2022 <<https://www.spiked-online.com/2022/05/31/literature-is-being-terrorised-by-cancel-culture/>>.

¹³⁰ K.R.M. Banfield-Nwachi, and S. Shaffi, ‘Rishi Sunak Joins Criticism of Changes to Roald Dahl Books’, *The Guardian*, 20 February 2023 <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/feb/20/roald-dahl-books-editing-philip-pullman>>.

¹³¹ Tyrone, ‘Literature Is Being Terrorised’.

which the profession does not put most importance on the creation and distribution of original text. Last, because text itself can also no longer be original or traced back to one person, affecting our ideas of originality. To be specific, we can now, with editing of author's texts with other people's words that constitute certain individual opinions and ideas, no longer assign a text edited to this extent to its original author only. Rather, it would assume co-authorship. Moreover, if we continue to deliberately edit texts to suit society's wishes, it can be argued whether a published text, and text in general, can be considered someone's original work at all. Perhaps, we are now circling back to Barthes' discussion whether an author's writing should be considered original at all. Moreover, we might rethink like Foucault the authority we assign to the idea of an author and its relation to originality.

As shown in Chapter 1, the legal agreements on the right of the author have been continuously adapted to try and preserve the author's rights in the publication process. Right now, these laws are facing new social challenges and have yet to be altered, which means that publishers can currently be free in editing the author's work post-mortem. In a way it makes sense we are now editing Dahl's texts, with regards to the practice of the publisher, socio-technology, and our focus on and expectation of versioning. As shown, the publisher has significant control over the way the practice of authorship is formed and there the way we conceptualise and treat authorship. The publisher therefore holds great power on what extent the author's traditional value of originality is being shaped and affected. US editor Emma Kantor for example proposes the use of a critical introduction to the text in which the controversy of the text is stated, instead of adapting author's original text.¹³² This way, the importance of artistic freedom and originality of text can be maintained in the practice of the author. The use of critical notes is unusual for the children's book but present opportunity, as this way the text continues to maintain the author's originality.

However, Fitzpatrick suggests a different view on authorship and originality in general and proposes that we should embrace that our definition of originality is changing, and therefore play into the ways the digital is changing our conceptualisation of text into a read-write structure. Fitzpatrick expects a new type and future of authorship, in which originality could be original remixing and collaboration: an original way of treating and combining existing text, such as fanfiction is already showing.¹³³ This is a radical change in the literary

¹³² N. Armstrong, 'Roald Dahl: The Fierce Debate Over Rewriting Children's Classics', *BBC*, 31 May 2023 <<https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20230530-roald-dahl-the-fierce-debate-over-rewriting-childrens-classics>>.

¹³³ Fitzpatrick, 'The Digital Future of Authorship', p. 18.

author's traditional conceptualisation of their practice, as well as literary writing in general. Moreover, this will continue to spark debate and critique in a system that values, and almost guards, the relation between authorship and originality, individuality, as well as intellectual and legal ownership. However, embracing process, versioning and commenting to be a part of authorship and writing, could open doors for future authors for open revision of their work, and by that offer them new chances instead of cancel-culture stress in this publishing culture and society.

Lauren Rieders so stresses that we should 'encourage a new type of originality by supporting the artist's own interpretation of a previous idea to create a new one built from a different individual'.¹³⁴ There are authors who aspire more collaboration in the field. Malcolm Gladwell mentions that literary authorship should embrace collaboration, as other professions of art do as well:

Writers. . . have this false ethic of originality. Whereas musicians are like, 'Yeah, totally — we took this little bit from that song. And it's inspired by this.' I love how open they are about the fact that creativity is a collective enterprise. I want writers to be able to talk that way. ('The Myth of the Lone Writer')

Additionally, self-published but now well-known author Hugh Howey embraces this type of collaboration and is openly stimulating fans to publish fanfiction based on his stories.¹³⁵ Because Dahl is now deceased, he cannot comply or expression his opinion on this type of collaboration in literary writing. Even so, it shows that in scholarly research as well as amongst authors themselves, changes are taking place in how we view and value originality in literary authorship. This change can also be seen in the editing of Dahl's stories. Namely, one could argue if Puffin in a way has decided that their writing can be a suitable representative of Dahl's original writing style and should therefore allow this type of collaboration.

Overall, the practice of publishing and authorship has taken a noticeable turn because of the current socio-technical relation which is centralizing the reader in publishing and therefore affecting originality in the practice. It can be questioned to what extent originality remains important in professional authorship, can still be guaranteed, and should even remain

¹³⁴ L. Rieders, 'Borrowing and Originality in Modern Authorship', *The Lehigh Review*, 15 (2007), p. 19.

¹³⁵ R. Edidin, 'Publishers Are Warming to Fan Fiction, But Can It Go Mainstream?', *Wired*, 24 February 2014 <<https://www.wired.com/2014/02/fanfic-and-publishers/>>.

related to literary authorship at all now we are as well as post-mortem, editing texts. As long as the medium develops, new ways of thinking about authorship and originality will continue that we can expect to put friction on our conventional ideas of the connection between originality and authorship. These changes require new ways of thinking about both being and becoming an author, and about dealing with texts as both publishers and readers. What the debate on the editing of Dahl's text shows, together with the findings in this section, is that there is now in a two-fold situation, where we should be thinking about whether or not there are multiple forms of authorship we should be treating differently, and whether or not we should come to terms with the fact that our conceptualisation of originality is inevitably changing, which will also inevitably affect the position and future of authorship. The fact that authorship is becoming more collaborated, and authors are experiencing infringement of their original work post-mortem, also leaves room for analysis in what ways our ideas on legal as well as emotional and intellectual ownership are currently being affected by the digital medium and digitisation of text, which will therefore be dealt with in the following section.

3.3 Ownership

The print medium and the practice of traditional authorship constructed the value of ownership. Ownership at times also resembles the value of individuality and originality because these values interplay. For example, it is usually an individual author who holds the ownership over a text. Therefore, the author is also the individual owner of the originality of a text. To be clear, this section will cover the authors value of ownership over a text that is constructed after publication. The value of ownership can be subdivided in legal and emotional ownership. Namely, by the publishing of a one's text, the author received legal ownership rights over their text, such as copyright, to protect their work. At the same time, these legal agreements also constructed the idea that the author is the owner of the original story, which at times can be based on personal experiences. Therefore, legal ownership also intensified the idea of emotional ownership.

The technological properties of the book partly set the traditional value of ownership. Namely, because of the fixity of text, and the read-only relationship between author and reader, literary texts were always expected to remain the same over time. At times, publishers have decided to update language with modern language. However, extensive edits that significantly reshapes the original story would always be executed in agreement with the

author. This control of the author also contributed to the idea of ownership in literary authorship.¹³⁶

The digital has turned the practice of authorship and readership from a private to public practice, and this has already reshaped the author's value of control and ownership. As mentioned before, remix texts, such as fanfiction, operate under ethical as well as legal agreements on the repurposing of one's work. The writing of fanfiction is legally allowed, but fans are not allowed to economically profit from writing texts that are clearly constructed on someone else's copyrighted ideas.¹³⁷ Rowling was able to successfully sue fan Vander Ark who wanted to use her original ideas to publish a *Harry Potter* encyclopaedia.¹³⁸ In that sense, adaptations on these laws still make sure that the author's rights with regards to making economic profit from their ideas, is in ownership of the author. Even so, as others can now legally repurpose and online publish other's original ideas to some extent, it shows that the author's general ownership over their original ideas and text, has diminished with the digital medium. Wolfgang Reißmann and others highlight that the reader is receiving more control, by arguing that 'fanfiction challenges prevalent concepts of individual authorship and proprietary of cultural goods'.¹³⁹ In short, authors do not have, and should not consider, similar ownership of their text as in traditional authorship, as well as their emotional ownership over their original ideas, and the ownership of the future of their texts.

Not only is this affecting the author's legal ownership of their text, it also negatively affects the author's value of emotional ownership. As traditional authorship guaranteed that the author's original ideas were not being repurposed without their consent, author's valued that their personal connections to texts were in a sense guarded. To be specific, original texts and therefore at times personal experiences, remained in their control and were not publicly appropriated or repurposed by others. However, remix culture shows the exact opposite. As users of text expect collaboration and control over texts, this resulted in critique from authors, as exemplified by Gabaldon, who saw that their personal and emotional stories were being repurposed, and not always in a light they meant their characters to be seen in. Even so, as the

¹³⁶ Fitzpatrick, 'The Digital Future of Authorship', p. 15.

¹³⁷ B. Evans, 'Fan Fiction and Copyright Infringement', *Harper James*, 8 March 2024
<<https://harperjames.co.uk/article/fanfiction-and-copyright-infringement/>>.

¹³⁸ J. Eligon, 'Rowling Wins Lawsuit Against Potter Lexicon', *The New York Times*, 8 September 2008
<<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/09/nyregion/09potter.html>>.

¹³⁹ W. Reißmann, and others, 'Fan (Fiction) Acting on Media and The Politics of Appropriation', *Media and Communication*, 5, 3 (2017), p. 23.

writing of fanfiction is legalised, authors must now come to terms with that their practice does not guarantee the same amount of ownership and control over their texts as before.

Additionally, the use of sensitivity readers and post-mortem editing has not yet been covered in the law on author's rights. Authors criticise the use of sensitivity readers and post-mortem edits, as they directly affect their legal and emotional ownership. The use of sensitivity readers is applied before, as well as, after the publication of text. Instead of that people are diminishing the author's control over the representation of their original work via remixing, publishers are now experiencing indirect control on the original text itself. As the use of sensitivity readers result as a demand of society and the reader, authors can criticise that a reader, who does not own the text, is indirectly making adaptations to a text that is not in their legal and emotional ownership. Anthony Horowitz writes about his experience with sensitivity readers, that 'it just feels wrong to be told what to write by an outside party, no matter how well-meaning'.¹⁴⁰ For future authors, this also raises the question to what extent their ownership can still be guaranteed in this profession. Namely, the traditional idea of ownership, proves not to exist, matter, and survive, to the same extent in the current practice of literary authorship as in traditional authorship.

If publishers start to edit texts without agreement of the author post-mortem, one can question whether we should still conceptualise as well as treat the original author as the sole author of the text. It has been discussed earlier in this thesis, whether we can assign ownership to Dahl's text solely to Dahl, as it now includes other's ideas as well. In the case of Dahl, Puffin is editing his texts, and even though they acknowledge they have edited the texts, they still contribute the texts to be in authorship of Roald Dahl. Therefore, we might also start thinking about whether we should solely assign ownership and authorship to Dahl, because currently the author remains the sole person carrying the responsibility of the ideas presented in this text. In this society, the attention is always shifted to the author of the text. If the publisher does not openly acknowledge part authorship and responsibility over the text, authors are being criticised for texts they might not have written, and unfairly damage their image.

As a result, it makes sense if the current and future author will start to think critically about collaborating with the traditional publisher. For example, as the publisher no longer

¹⁴⁰ A. Horowitz, 'My Clash With 'Sensitivity Readers'', *The Spectator*, 4 February 2023
<<https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/my-clash-with-sensitivity-readers/>>.

guarantees that they will maintain or value the author's desires post-mortem, the author might re-consider the relevance of their artistic freedom and emotional connection with their text before publication. The topic of control and ownership is one of the key reasons why unpublished as well as published authors are now deciding to self-publish. Multiple interviews with authors offered the conclusion that 'control of all aspects of publication is a key motivator and reason for satisfaction'.¹⁴¹ Published authors could use their fame, and unpublished authors could try to gain social capital online, and via that way successfully self-publish their stories. This way, authors will at least have more control over, for example, whether they will collaborate with sensitivity readers, and who is ownership and control over their texts after death. Imogen West-Knights highlights that 'may be that what happened with Dahl will serve as a cautionary tale to editors rather than open a floodgate to further retroactive editing of this kind', which could guard author's value of ownership.¹⁴² Even so, if authors decide to stay in traditional publishing, they either must now advocate for certain changes in the law to maintain the author's ownership, or embrace that the laws and our conceptualisations of authorship under which they are publishing their texts now, as well as their original text, might take on a different form post-mortem.

In short, the digital medium has helped increase the readers and publishers' control over author's texts, and their influence on the need for sensitivity readers and post-mortem editing, diminishes the author's legal and emotional ownership. As a result of the increasing control of the publisher and reader in who, and what, is getting published in literary publishing, we should start thinking differently about assigning ownership and authorship. It might be difficult for authors to accept that our attitudes towards ownership are inevitably changing, offering, and expecting readers and publishers to have more control, because this is in stark contrast to the authors' traditional notion that control over their text was mostly in their hands. Even so, the digital and society continues to evolve, shaping new laws, which will undoubtedly continue to change the practice of the author, and our conceptualisation of the author in return. The author's values on individuality, originality, and ownership, take significant part in shaping the author's value of authority. It is necessary to discuss how the

¹⁴¹ P. Courtney and A. Flood, 'Polly Courtney: 'Now I'm Back to Self-Publishing, I've Regained Control', *The Guardian*, 20 June 2013 <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/jun/20/self-publishing-polly-courtney>>; L. Walters, 'I Didn't Want To Resort To Self-Publishing But It's An Exhilarating Change', *The Guardian*, 22 February 2016 <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2016/feb/22/i-didnt-want-to-resort-to-self-publishing-but-its-an-exhilarating-change>>; A. Baverstock, and J. Steinitz, 'What Satisfactions do Self-Publishing Authors Gain From The Process?', *Learned Publishing*, 26, 4 (2013), p. 274.

¹⁴² West-Knights, 'Roald Dahl, Rewrites and the Truth About 'Sensitivity Readers''.

entirety of our conceptualisations of and attitudes toward authority is changing, to understand in what ways the digital medium is reshaping our conceptualisation of and attitudes towards literary authorship entirely.

3.4 Authority

Key to traditional authorship is the value of authority. The author constructed this value after the publication of their text. To clarify, authority in authorship is built on ideas of prestige, control, and power. At the same time, the construction of authority interplays with ideas of ownership, individuality, and originality. The practice of literary authorship constructed the author's authority in several ways. First, as publishing houses recognised authors' texts as original, they assigned quality to text, and authorship became a prestigious practice.¹⁴³ This also interplays with the fact that publishers divide amateur writers from published authors in that authors make money from writing and can be considered a profession.¹⁴⁴ Foucault underscores that readers also reciprocated ideas of authority in authorship. Namely, when the author's name is unknown, readers try to find the name of the author so that they can assign the text a certain value as well as make meaning from it.¹⁴⁵ The print medium and print text also enhanced ideas of authority. The text's quality, and fixity after publication, created reliability and was 'a sign of a text's authority'.¹⁴⁶ Therefore, authors constructed the idea of authority after publication because they were the individuals in legal and moral ownership, and control, over the text.

Right now, the digital medium is reshaping our ideas on prestige in authorship. Van der Weel asserts that in the print era:

Publication was distinctive precisely because it was not available to all and sundry. Once achieved, publication could become a source of prestige, be it economic or symbolic (or a combination). ('Literary Authorship in the Digital Age', 229)

Now, it has become significantly easier to distribute a self-published book and reach a worldwide audience because of the Internet on platforms such as Amazon's 'Amazon

¹⁴³ Van der Weel, 'Literary Authorship in the Digital Age', p. 224; Lyle Skains, *Digital Authorship*, p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ Van der Weel, 'Literary Authorship in the Digital Age', p. 224.

¹⁴⁵ Foucault, 'What is an Author?', p. 306.

¹⁴⁶ Fitzpatrick, 'The Digital Future of Authorship', p. 10.

Publishing’ and ‘Kindle Direct Publishing’.¹⁴⁷ Self-publishing does not guarantee success or sales, but there have been many cases where self-published stories became bestsellers. For example, J.M. Dalgliesh has already sold two million copies of his self-published crime thrillers.¹⁴⁸

In theory, with the digital medium, anyone can make money from writing and claim the title of author. Because of mass authorship and our new mindset on text, we now have different ideas on quality in text. These new ideas on quality also reshape our ideas on authority in authorship. Van der Weel highlights that via the digital medium, ‘writing is made public that would have remained private under a paper dispensation’.¹⁴⁹ One could therefore rightfully argue what this means for the quality of informal and self-published texts. Generally, the digital medium is known for a way to spread misinformation, and text loses its reliability and authority in general. Moreover, as some self-published stories are turning into a success, many readers now believe they can write a story as well, which introduces more texts that are low in quality. Together with author-branding, the practice of writing and therefore authorship is regarded as less serious and unique and, in that way, less prestigious.

Additionally, one can question what texts traditional publishers still define as “quality”. Currently, many publishers are interested in collaborating with successful self-published authors, celebrities, as well fanfiction authors with a large fanbase, because of their guaranteed success. Lindsay Littleton remarks that bookstores are filled by celebrity authors in the UK. She expresses her concern and shares online that ‘the children’s bookshelf in WH Smith always makes me wonder why I keep trying’, as it is filled with books written by celebrities.¹⁵⁰ Traditional publishers such as Penguin Random House now present that quality in text does not only correspond to creative and original writing, but social capital as well. This can be exemplified by Penguin Random House’s recent decision to collaborate with Wattpad in their ‘Wattpad WEBTOON’.¹⁵¹ Wattpad will ‘handpick a balanced list of

¹⁴⁷ ‘Great Stories Are Our Passion’, *Amazon Publishing*, n.d. <<https://amazonpublishing.amazon.com/>>; ‘Welcome to Kindle Direct Publishing’, *Amazon*, n.d. <https://kdp.amazon.com/nl_NL/>.

¹⁴⁸ D. Alberge, ‘Five Years and 2M Copies Later, Self-Published Author Lands UK Book Deal’, *The Guardian*, 17 December 2023 <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/dec/17/self-published-author-uk-book-deal-jm-dalgliesh-amazon-kindle-bestsellers-publisher>>.

¹⁴⁹ Van der Weel, ‘Literary Authorship in the Digital Age’, p. 229.

¹⁵⁰ @ljlittleton, ‘The children’s bookshelf in WH Smith always makes me wonder why I keep trying. Alesha Dixon, Geri Halliwell, Stephen Mulhern, Jamie Oliver, Matt Lucas are all prominent...’, X, 22 May 2024 <<https://x.com/ljlittleton/status/1793206210717512150>>.

¹⁵¹ ‘PRHPS’ Newest Client: Wattpad WEBTOON Book Group’, *Penguin Random House*, 23 January 2024 <<https://global.penguinrandomhouse.com/announcements/prhps-newest-client-wattpad-webtoon-book-group/>>.

commercial fiction and diverse, inclusive stories that our readers are already obsessed with' to 'publish the world's next bestsellers' at publishers such as Penguin Random House.¹⁵² Phoebe Morgan who works at Hodder & Stoughton emphasises that 'the way the industry works is that we jump on bandwagons', and right now, the bandwagon is the publication of anyone with social capital.¹⁵³ Overall, one could argue whether the traditional commercial publisher increasingly relates quality with social capital instead of creative and original writing, or becomes less interested in quality in writing in general.

Dahl's case also exemplifies the shift in quality and who holds authority in the practice of authorship. Puffin's decision to edit Dahl's texts shows that they see more value in the demand of the reader, instead of the originality and creativity of Dahl's original writing. Right now, Puffin presents that the quality of Dahl's text is his broad audience mainly. Puffin treats Dahl's texts as a brand. As the market demands for a change in writing, Puffin has decided to edit Dahl's texts to suit the market and continue sales. This at the same time constructs a new idea of authority in authorship that is not prominently related to quality in writing. In a way, author-branding centralises the author exactly in the ways that Barthes' wishes us not to. We assign value to a text because of the author's name, i.e. their fame, instead of reading the text and then assigning value to text. Philip Pullman stresses that he experiences Dahl's 'massive commercial gravity' in the field of authorship.¹⁵⁴ About the editing of his texts, he notes that they 'should be allowed to fade away' and we would 'read all these wonderful authors who are writing today who don't get much of a look' as a result of commercialisation such as Dahl.¹⁵⁵ By stating this, he highlights that Dahl's authority has become irrelevant in the current publishing field.

As shown, the reader now has significant authority in the practice of authorship. This change can be explained by text and the author losing its prestige, and the digital medium assigning the reader more control. Because of its instability and loss of quality, text loses its reliability and therefore authority.¹⁵⁶ Also, Van der Weel notes that because we now prioritise

¹⁵² A. Steffey, 'Wattpad WEBTOON Studios', *Wattpad*, n.d. <<https://creators.wattpad.com/programs-and-opportunities/wattpad-webtoon-studios/>>.

¹⁵³ J. Self, 'Keanu and Co: How Celebrities Became Bestselling Novelists', *The Guardian*, 13 January 2024 <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2024/jan/13/keanu-and-co-how-celebrities-became-bestselling-novelists>>.

¹⁵⁴ A. Nugent, 'Philip Pullman Suggests Roald Dahl Books Should Go 'Out of Print' Amid Edits Controversy', *Independent*, 20 February 2023 <<https://independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/news/roald-dahl-philip-pullman-edits-b2285643.html>>.

¹⁵⁵ Nugent, 'Philip Pullman'.

¹⁵⁶ Fitzpatrick, 'The Digital Future of Authorship', p. 10.

process, digital writers care less for the quality of the content of informal texts.¹⁵⁷ As a result, text is now losing both its authority and prestige, but moreover, authorship is losing its authority. As a cause of this new mindset on text and authorship, people start to treat text as well as authorship less serious than in the print era. This also interplays with the fact that power and control are shifting from the author to the reader. First, it was only in the power of the author to express and share their ideas, but now anyone can share their thoughts online. Because of the read-write structure of digital text and the affordances of commenting, readers are allowed to be more demanding, and expect to have agency on what is being published.

Fitzpatrick asserts that the ‘disordering of authorial agency in favour of an increasingly active reader is a disruption of authority inasmuch as a changing relationship’.¹⁵⁸ In the hierarchy between author, publisher, and reader, the reader is now the one in ownership of increasingly more authority. This new mindset on text is affecting the author’s power and control, which can be exemplified by the case of Dahl. The idea that readers now treat the author and text less seriously in general, and have increasingly more authority in the publishing field, could explain why there is also support for the editing of Dahl’s texts.

Van der Weel notes what follows is that readers ‘elevated themselves to the rank of published authors’.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, he asserts that:

The more power the reader is offered, or arrogates to him- or herself – thus the more active the reader is as an agent in the process – the more responsible he or she becomes for its outcome, as a corollary diminishing the author’s role. (‘Literary Authorship’, 227)

In these minds, it makes sense that readers demands can and should reshape texts, and this explains current support on the use of sensitivity readers in the practice of authorship. Moreover, together with author-branding, the readers increasing power shows that publishing is become more reader-oriented, rather than centred on the author.

This change in the practice of authorship does not go unnoticed, and traditional authors, readers and independent publishers are trying to find ways to maintain the author’s traditional prestige in the practice. For example, authors have coined the term ‘celebrity

¹⁵⁷ Van der Weel, ‘Literary Authorship in the Digital Age’, p. 230.

¹⁵⁸ Fitzpatrick, ‘The Digital Future of Authorship’, p. 8.

¹⁵⁹ Van der Weel, ‘Literary Authorship in the Digital Age’, p. 223.

novelist', to divide the 'real' author from the celebrity author and in that way protect their prestige.¹⁶⁰ However, The Guardian notes that this idea is not appreciated by literary agent Curtis Brown, who terms it is 'pejorative'.¹⁶¹ Similarly, soon-to-be-published journalist Lorraine Kelly stresses that 'I'd rather just "novelist", to be honest'.¹⁶²

Because of the digital medium and our new mindset on text, the traditional value of authority is taking on a different shape and definition in the practice of literary authorship. Namely, it diminishes the general prestige of publishing and authorship, authority is constructed from social capital instead of originality, and the reader holds almost the same control and power as the author in the hierarchy between author and reader. These changes pose the question to what extent literary authorship can still be considered an authoritative practice in the traditional way. Via the increasing use of social capital and author-branding, the digital medium is turning literary authorship into a brand and diminishing the future prestige and authority of authorship in traditional publishing. Perhaps traditional authors are forced to shift to independent publishing. However, whether these independent publishers will thrive amongst big publishers and in this critical society can be questioned. Either way should authors entering the traditional publishing industry come to terms with the fact that the practice does now assign authority in a significantly different way than in the print era.

¹⁶⁰ Self, 'Keanu and Co'.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I aimed to explore in what ways our changing attitudes towards authorship can be related back to the digital medium. This question found its origin in Puffin's decision to edit Roald Dahl's texts post-mortem. Therefore, this case has been used repeatedly as a case study in this thesis. To answer the research question, I have made use of Kathleen Fitzpatrick's conceptual framework by which she theorises that our uses of the digital medium and the introduction of digital text reshapes our ideas of and attitudes towards scholarly authorship. Additionally, this thesis has followed that we have established a new mindset on text that is shifted to how we treat all text, whether published in print or digitally. Even though Fitzpatrick's theory, as well as Van der Weel's notions on medial bias, are circumstantial, it has been considered plausible in this research that a medium and text takes a part in the construction of our ideas on concepts such as authorship. Moreover, this research has followed the theory that not only technology, as Van der Weel would argue, but also societal changes and practices such as publishing, as posed by Barthes, Foucault, and Bhaskar, are of influence on how we conceptualise concepts such as authorship.

Overall, I have analysed the following four values by which we traditionally conceptualised authorship: individuality, originality, ownership, and authority. This analysis has painted a picture of in what exact ways authorship has changed compared to traditional authorship. Firstly, authorship has turned from an individual into a collaborative practice with the rise of remix culture and the use of sensitivity readers in publishing. Secondly, instead of publishing original writing, authors are facing an increased focus on social capital in traditional publishing. Thirdly, authors are losing a control in ownership by remix culture, the editing of texts post-mortem, and the introduction of sensitivity readers. Lastly, authors are losing a sense of authority and prestige, because of mass-authorship, post-humous editing, and a more demanding and authoritative reader.

These changes in literary authorship can in part be traced back to the digitisation of text and the salient properties and affordances of the digital medium. These changes are also the result of an interplay between the medium and societal expectations, such as the current desire for diversity and inclusivity in society and therefore also in literature in the UK. The digitisation of text has in part created a new mindset on text. This new mindset is reflected on how we now treat all authors and their texts. For example, digital text introduces the idea that text is centred on process. Namely, the affordances of the digital medium, such as editing and republishing, allow texts to be in process. Users of the digital medium are becoming

accustomed to this idea and use of text, and by that expect that texts, such as news reports, will immediately be updated if needed. Moreover, the digital medium allows for linking as well as the appropriation of texts in forms such as fanfiction, which has also shown that we centralise text over the author. Overall, we now conceptualise texts as something that is in process, less authoritative, and something that can be changed.

This sense of authority in the reader also results from the affordances and salient properties of the digital medium. The salient property of commenting allows for direct contact between publishers, authors and readers on social media. It therefore also allows for the establishment of fanbases as well as online social capital. What follows is that publishers are becoming more interested in author-branding aside from publishing qualitative or original writing. This shows that publication is becoming more dependent on the interests and wishes of the reader, rather than the originality or literary quality of the writing. At the same time, it also gives the reader more control on who or what is not getting published or discontinued in publishing. Publishers have always faced risks, but the effects of digital movements are just around the corner because of the potential of social media. Namely, the voice and the opinion of the reader can be significantly influence via commenting and interactivity. The reader's power on the Internet can for example be exemplified by cancel culture and Puffin's decision to use sensitivity readers. As a result, the reader expects change, as well as agency and control over what is being published, i.e. authority. The combination of the authoritative reader, as well as our new mindset on text, also likely helped shape Puffin's decision to edit Dahl's texts post-mortem or introduce the use of sensitivity readers. Overall, it seems most likely that the current authoritative reader as well as our new mindset on text finds a significant part of its origin in the digital medium and the digitisation of text.

Altogether, our new mindset on text as well as the affordances of the digital medium contribute to the changing relations between the author, publisher, and reader. In general, authors have lost their value of authority on all grounds that it was ensured in the print era, i.e. the values of individuality, originality, ownership, and prestige. Instead, the reader has received more authority and control in this society and with the digital medium. The reader has more influence on the decision-making process of the publisher and the presentation of a published story. This shift in authority and control from author to reader is reshaping the entire practice of publishing. This can be exemplified by the introduction of author-branding, sensitivity readers, as well as the post-mortem editing of Dahl's texts.

There are many ideas to try guard the practice and rights of the current and past author. For example, contemporary authors could reach out to institutions like SoA to find support and help to protect their texts post-mortem. Perhaps one day, a similar case such as Dahl's edits will present itself in court or reshape the legal agreements on author's rights. Even so, we cannot predict whether any legal agreements will be realised, or that if they will be, these will not still change the practice and our ideas of authorship. For example, the legal agreements on the writing of fanfiction only prohibited the commercialisation of these texts. However, it still allowed readers to appropriate author's original stories. That way, it still reshaped the author's practice. Namely, it affected their values of ownership and individuality, as well as our ideas of authorship and appropriating original text in general.

Perhaps contemporary authors could try and find ways to embrace that their practice is changing. For example, it could be interesting to explore collaboration with one's readers, as already exemplified by J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and The Cursed Child* and advocated by author Malcolm Gladwell.¹⁶³ Perhaps authors could start to explore collaboration with each other in new ways. They might try and find balance between the appropriation of each other's works, similar to what is happening with agreements on sampling original works in the music industry as well.¹⁶⁴ However, perhaps Puffin's decision to edit Dahl's text is a reason for a radical movement in literary writing that will uproot the traditional idea of the practice entirely. Namely, authors could unite and decide that traditional publishing might not align with their ideas on the practice and purposes of literary authorship anymore. Even so, it remains difficult to visualise the effects of such a movement, as well as how these authors can then find their way back to a practice that resembles traditional authorship.

Even though these new developments in publishing are still being debated and facing its consequences, it cannot be denied that the practice of authorship and our ideas on authorship have changed. This thesis has shown that many of these changes find a share of its origin in the digital medium and the digitisation of text. In the end, this thesis presents a general overview of the relation between the digital medium and our changing ideas on and attitudes towards literary authorship. However, this research still leaves room for more studies into the relation between authorship and the digital medium. For example, this field of study could benefit from more research into the system of publishing and its role in society.

¹⁶³ Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*.

¹⁶⁴ S. Kuper, 'The Myth of the Lone Writer', *Financial Times*, 22 February 2024
<<https://ft.com/content/db9682f9-e0c0-4015-bd0e-4881d728dcb9>>.

Similarly, this research could benefit from an even more thorough exploration of the four values in the print era because of the limited scope of this thesis. Right now, we are also facing a new advance in the digital medium that presents itself in authorship which has not been analysed in this thesis. Namely, we are experiencing the use and advances of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in writing. The use of AI raises new questions to authorship. For example, to what extent do we desire that the stories we read are written by humans? Will AI successfully enter publishing? How does AI raise new ideas and debate on the concept of the death of the author? The only thing we can be sure of, is that the advances of the digital medium will continue to change the practice and our conceptualisations of literary authorship.

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