Can You Quote Donald Duck?: Intellectual Property in Cyberculture

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Abstract

Rosemary J. Coombe's The Cultural Life of Intellectual Properties: Authorship, Appropriation, and the Law begins with the author, Associate Professor of Law at the University of Toronto, walking down Queen Street in Toronto, navigating a maze of intellectual property. She buys coffee at Starbucks®; sees billboards for Black Label® beer; T-shirts with My Favorite Martian™ and Mattel's Hot Wheels®, bottles of Clearly Canadian® water and packages of Land-O-Lakes® margarine adorned with its trademark Indian princess; and passes a McDonald's®, which features a Disney Magic Kingdom® tie-in to a (copyrighted) movie called The Indian in the Closet.

She also meets the counterculture of intellectual property, including a shoulder bag proclaiming its wearer "Armed and Hammered," posters for the Nancy Sinatras (a lesbian band), a jacket patch of Colonel Sanders overlaid with a skull-and-crossbones, and unlicensed T-shirts featuring copyrighted Picasso paintings. On this walk, which reflects any short walk down any city street by any reasonably attentive observer, Coombe observes, "I have considered at least thirty-four legally protected cultural texts, run into about a dozen potential intellectual property infringements, and encountered a score of other intellectual properties I didn't reflect upon."

Recommended Citation