Authorship Acknowledgement in Ovid and Martial, or How to Rethink Copyright in the Digital Age

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1. Introduction: world after copyright (and before)

1.1 After copyright

For centuries, during what we may call the "Gutenberg age", the circulation of texts, including literary works, depended primarily on the technology of print. The audience did not own the technology through which texts were reproduced and circulated. Publishers controlled the process of textual transmission. The relationship between author, work and audience has been shaped by this situation, since the copyright system was developed and enforced.

In our days the Gutenberg age is slowly being followed by a digital age in which the audience of digitalised texts controls the technology of text reproduction.

In the current framework, once a book is digitalised, each one of us can make a copy of it with our computers. Once again, the audience controls the technology of text reproduction, while publishers have lost the monopoly on that process. Copyright is technically not enforcible any more.

As a consequence, we are faced with an important challenge. We need to devise what comes next, after copyright: that is what technical and legal framework will govern the production and the distribution of texts, including literary works, essays, handbooks, news and all possible forms of published textual material.

Is it all about money? At first sight, it is. The most evident issue arising is that we shall always have authors that will need to make a living out of their intellectual and creative activity. In a world where copyright is no longer enforceable, it will not be the economic mediation of publishers to support authors. So, who will?

However, if we look at the matter more closely, we see that much more is at stake. The issue of the material support of writers is only the evident surface of a much broader issue. The digital revolution is changing our concept of authorship (think of dispersed authorship in Wikis), our concept of text boundaries (just think of hypertexts), our concept of intellectual property (think of the viral diffusion and re-use of texts and multimedia resources over the Internet) and our concept of the author-reader relationship (think of blogs with posts and comments), as well as the very distinction between author and reader (think of the whole of Web 2.0, where the content is created by users, so readers are authors).

What is actually at stake is not only the economic support of writers, but our very concept of text and a new relationship between author, work and audience. We need to devise entirely new models for this relationship.

1.2 Before copyright: a case study

I suggest that a thoughtful analysis of the model of textual production and diffusion in the Roman Empire of the I Century CE may be useful in this respect. Not in order to take that framework as an example to imitate (as we shall see it was heavily flawed), but simply because it may be a "case study" of an actual literary system working without copyright. An analysis of the patterns that we will identify in that system, and even of the flaws that we will find, will increase our awareness as we strive to envision a future functional model beyond copyright.

On this occasion I shall focus on two significant testimonies, Ovid's exile poetry and Martial, and take into account their literary representations of issues like literary success, authorship, library circulation and material support. Ovid and Martial provide us not only with a deep insight into the ancient model of literary circulation, but above all with a representation and a reflection on the drawbacks of that model. We shall try to extract the quintessential issues implied by a copyright-free environment and see if some of those issues return in the digital scenarios arising today.

2. The ancient model

2.1 Patronage and dissemination

Let us start with a brief sketch of the ancient model of textual production and circulation.

Lest we have any doubt about it, the jurist Gaius informs us that there was no such thing as legal protection of an author's copyright in ancient Rome[1]. If a bookseller invested on some papyrus and had a slave copy a poem, the right to exploit that papyrus and whatever was written on it commercially belonged exclusively to the *librarius* (the bookseller). The poem's author did not earn a sesterce from the copies actually sold[2]. Once *editus* (literally, "given out"), the work was *publicatus*, that is – quite literally – it was in the public domain. Those who could actually read and appreciate a literary work normally owned the technology necessary to make private copies of that work, mostly through the labour of *servi librarii*. Finding a copy to reproduce was hardly difficult, either through the network of friends or in public libraries. Some needed, or just preferred, to refer to the services of the professional *tabernae librariae*. However, they were not paying for the intellectual property of the work, but simply for the process of its reproduction.

Also declamations of literary works, although a central part of literary success in ancient Rome, and especially in the early imperial age, were not a source of income, and in some cases they could even be onerous for the author himself[3].

If the book market and declamations were by no means a way for writers to gain economic support, how did they support themselves? If they did not belong to the two higher social *ordines*, the senatorial and the equestrian, the only actual source of support was constituted by patronage.

In social terms, the patron was essentially an intermediary between the audience and the

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[1] Gaius 2.77: *Eadem ratione probatum est, quod in cartulis sive membranis meis aliquis scripserit, licet aureis litteris, meum esse, quia litterae cartulis sive membranis cedunt: itaque si ego eos libros easve membranas petam nec inpensam scripturae solvam, per exceptionem doli mali summoueri potero*. In the next paragraph, the jurist discusses the case of a painted *tabula*, and his conclusions are quite opposite: the painter owns the work, not the owner of the tablet. Cfr. Seneca, *De Beneficiis* 7.6. See Fitzgerald 2007, 97 n. 57; Seo 2009, 580.

[2] His best option was to sell an unpublished manuscript to a bookseller for (little) money. But the bookseller did **not** acquire any legal *exclusive* right on the work's reproduction.

[3] See Tacitus, *Dialogus de oratoribus* 9.3: *nam et domum mutuatur et auditorium exstruit et subsellia conducit et libellos dispergit*.

author. As a part of the obligations of his social status, he was expected to offer the people free forms of entertainment and other commodities. In this circular pattern, the author gives his literary production to the public domain as a form of high level entertainment; but since the people implicitly confer social status to the *élite* through consensus, the latter, in turn, is expected to fulfil its duties of generosity, including rewarding the "darling of the audience". A flaw in this system was that the "darlings of the audience" included gladiators, mimes or chariot drivers alongside fine poets. But its main drawback was constituted by the whimsical nature of the relationship between patron and client[4].

In ancient Rome an author had a specific interest in the uncontrolled dissemination of his works because this increased his chances to access patronage. Quite the opposite of the Gutenberg age's copyright system, which was based on strict control over textual reproduction and diffusion.

2.2 The crisis of the ancient model in the I Century CE

This model, as I said, was definitely not perfect. More specifically, our literary sources claim that it entered a deep crisis in the I Century CE.

Two authors, Ovid and Martial, portray this crisis in a particularly interesting manner, while being at the same time among our best sources on patronage and the process of distribution of literary works in the Roman world.

2.2.1 Ovid

In his *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, Ovid chooses to lay bare and discuss his patronage network, a topic intentionally taken out of his previous production, his relationship with the imperial court, and his relationship with the general audience of readers.

In Ovid's exile poetry the poetic *persona* needs to obtain the revocation of his banishment or a mitigation of it from the emperor, and ultimately aims to regain his social status. He often evokes those aspects of literary reception through which he had gained that status in the first place, including his personal relationship with influential patrons and his success among the general audience[5]. Ovid brings to the fore the image of his own poetic book as a physical object[6], such as in *Tristia* 1.1, his first work from exile, where he gives the book instructions to reach Rome, where his author cannot go (Ov. *Trist.* 1.1.1-4):

> *Parve – nec invideo – sine me, liber, ibis in Vrbem,*
>   *ei mihi, quo domino non licet ire tuo!*
> *vade, sed incultus, qualem decet exulis esse;*
>   *infelix habitum temporis huius habe.*[7]

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4   In this system literary prestige gave an author the chance to access patronage. Literary prestige, in its turn, derived from two things: the appreciation of a closed élite of readers in the frame of a "private" circulation of the text, as well as from wide success among a "public". Such success was ultimately the widest possible dissemination of texts, through public declamations and especially through "viral" distribution of copies of one's literary production.

5   Citroni 1995, 548-561.

6   Citroni 1986, 121-124.

7   In lines 105-108: cum tamen in nostrum fueris penetrale receptus, /   contigerisque tuam, scrinia curva, domum, / aspicies illic positos ex ordine fratres, /   quos studium cunctos evigilavit idem, the book is to go to Ovid's home and sit in the scrinia aside his fratres, the other works of the poet, of which we are given a partial list in the next verses (Ov. Trist. 1.1.109-118),   so through the book of the Tristia the whole poetic production of the poet is evoked. In addition, the second book of the *Tristia* starts with a direct appeal to the book. Ov. *Trist*. 2.1-2: *Quid mihi vobiscum est, infelix cura, libelli / ingenio perii qui miser ipse meo?*

In the opening lines of the third book of Ovid's *Tristia*, it is the book itself that speaks, asking the "friend reader" (*amicus lector*, v. 2) to drive him around Rome in a semi-clandestine wondering. It will try to access the public libraries, where it will not be admitted[8]. The latter elegy makes it clear that the objectification of the book[9] and the symbolic identification of the author with it are literary strategies to represent the relationship of the author with his audience.

The circulation of Ovid's works in Rome has been challenged by acts like the banishment of their copies from the public libraries, and above all by the intimidatory effect that such a form of literary *damnatio memoriae* could have on the audience (Ov. 3.1.69-72). The "viral" diffusion of handwritten copies technically cannot be stopped by an imperial edict, but only a very strong relationship between writer and audience can overcome fear.

[10]Through such allusions, Ovid indirectly reminds Augustus the paradoxical nature of his own exile. As the supreme patron of the arts in the new scenario, the emperor is expected to be responsive to the special relationship that such a successful author used to entertain with his audience and to protect him consequently. Augustus' policy, instead, represents an obstacle to such relationship. The fact that Ovid still publishes books and "sends" them to Rome, thus keeping his relationship with the audience alive, just emphasises the absurdity of the situation[11].

2.2.2 Martial

If Ovid objectified the book and evoked – in a problematical way – the role of public and private success in the author's status, Martial goes beyond Ovid, in that he commodifies the literary book and reveals the economic aspects involved in literary production, dispersal and reception. He very often presents the book as a commodity to be bought and sold in the book shops (Mart. 1.2; 1.3; 1.117; 3.2; 4.72)[12] or as an object of exchange in a patronage relationship whose economic aspects are not always disguised by the concept of *amicitia* (e.g. Mart. 1.117)[13]. Famously, he tends to indulge in self-representation of his poetic *persona* as extremely poor, which has been interpreted either literally or as a sophisticated metaliterary discourse.

We shall now briefly focus on a series of epigrams in which Martial complains about rival poetasters who plagiarise his verses, including a Fidentinus (Mart. 1.29; 1.38; 1.52; 1.53; 1.63; 1.66; 1.72; 2.20; 7.77; 10.100; 11.94; 12.63)[14]. In 1.29, Martial playfully tells Fidentinus that if he acknowledges Martial's authorship of his *libelli*, he will send him a copy of them for free; but if he wants to acquire their authorship in front of the audience, he has to pay for it[15]:

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8 Ov. *Trist.* 3.1.1-2: *Missus in hanc venio timide liber exulis Vrbem: / da placidam fesso, lector amice, manum;* 3.1.69-72: *altera templa peto, vicino iuncta theatro: / haec quoque erant pedibus non adeunda meis. / nec me, quae doctis patuerunt prima libellis, / atria Libertas tangere passa sua est.*

9 On the objectification of the book in Ovid, see Roman 2001 and and Fitzgerald 2007 "possession"; Citroni 1986 p. 120; Seo 2009. Roman 2011 specifically speaks of "commodification" (reduction to marketable merchandise).

10 Ovid's appeal to the book had its main precedent in the closing poem of Horace's first book of *Epistulae* (Hor. *Epist.* 1.20). But whereas Horace condemns the public circulation of its work, Ovid chooses an opposite metaliterary strategy: he declares to seek not only the private literary communication with noble and learned friends, but also that contact with the general audience that exile threatens. This is his reaction to exile.

11 In a way, as Mario Citroni points out, the very **re-establishment** of the literary **communication** between the exiled poet and his audience **neutralises** the effect of Augustus' punishment. See Citroni 1986, 123.

12 Roman 126 contrasts Mart. 1.2 it with Hor. Epistulae 1.20; on Mart. 1.3 see Roman 127. On Mart. 3.2 see Roman 139.

13 Seo 579 argues that in Mart. 1.117 Martial contrasts here the gift ethics with economic exchange (and she mentions scholarship on gift economy).

14 See Spahlinger 2004, Seo, Roman.

15 On the precise interpretation of the joke in the last line, see Anderson 2006.

> *Fama refert nostros te, Fidentine, libellos*
> *Non aliter populo quam recitare tuos.*
> *Si mea vis dici, gratis tibi carmina mittam:*
> *Si dici tua vis, hoc eme, ne mea sint.*

The same "indecent proposal" returns in Mart. 1.66. In many of these poems Martial metaphorically commodifies his own authorship, in that he calls the men who appropriated it "thief" (*furtum*: 1.53.3; *fur*: 1.53.12; *fur avare*: 1.66.1) or "slave-stealer" (*plagiarius*: 1.52.19; which is where our word "plagiarism" comes from...)[16]. In others, he plays with the *double-entendre* lying behind "buying" or "owing a book" in antiquity, since his plagiarists have only bought the book as an object, but they pretend in front of the audience that the book as a literary product is theirs (Mart. 2.20; 12.63)[17]. So Martial paradoxically proposes to sell the plagiarist his authorship of his own work (Mart. 1.29 and 1.66, as we have seen[18]).

In other poems, Martial denounces contemptuous poems circulated erroneously under his name, which was disruptive of his reputation (Mart. 7.12; 10.3)[19].

The analysis of such epigrams makes it clear that what counted for the poet was authorship acknowledgement, not the book market in itself. The literary prestige that allowed the poet to gain support from patronage[20] required that the connection between an author and his work was not endangered by plagiarists like Fidentinus or by false attributions that degraded the poet's public image (as in Mart. 7.12; 10.3, but also, in a different way, in 1.38; 1.53; 10.100).

These poems may be read as a sophisticated metaliterary play on authorship and on the relationship between an author, his work, his audience and his patrons.

2.3 Fiction or reality?

A brief methodological specification is now necessary. One could object that neither Ovid nor Martial can be used as direct sources on literary circulation in ancient Rome since their work is not a faithful biography but a sophisticated fictional construction. However, such an objection, in my view, would misrepresent the terms of the question. The misfortunes of Ovid's banished *persona* and of Martial's allegedly penniless *persona* are not to be taken literally, as a faithful source fot their author's biography, but to be analysed with our critical instruments to reconstruct the metaliterary discourse that they build on the role of literature in the imperial society, and namely on

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16 See PWRE, Seo, Roman and Hor. 1.20 for the slave-metaphor.

17 The case of Mart. 7.77 is slightly more complex. The poet implies that Tucca will sell on the market the books that Martial will send to him as a gift. If Tucca will sell only the copy that he has received for free by Martial, this is a simple case of slyness. If Tucca, however, plans to present the books as his and sell them as such to some librarius, this epigram falls into the same category of the "Fidentinus cycle" (see Spahlinger 2004).

18 The playful tone is evident in these and in other epigrams on plagiarism (Mart. 1.38; 1.63; 1.72.), and is increased by the evident absurdity of such "authorship purchase" in a framework where even simple copyright could not be sold and bought, simply because it did not exist. The passage of jurist Gaius mentioned above is clear in this respect. When Seneca mentions the paradox of Livy buying his own books from librarius Dorus, he is doing – in another genre and for other aims – something very similar to Martial's game. (Seneca, *De Beneficiis* 7.6): In omnibus istis, quae modo rettuli, uterque eiusdem rei dominus est. Quo modo? quia alter rei dominus est, alter usus. Libros dicimus esse Ciceronis; eosdem Dorus librarius suos vocat, et utrumque verum est: alter illos tamquam auctor sibi, alter tamquam emptor adserit; ac recte utriusque dicuntur esse, utriusque enim sunt, sed non eodem modo. Sic potest Titus Livius a Doro accipere aut emere libros suos.

19 See Seo n. 6, s. v. defamation through misattribution.

20 It may be meaningful that in 1.52 Martial calls on one of his patrons, Quintianus, to judge in an attribution quarrel between him and a rival: see the metaphor of the quarrel for the property of a manumitted slave and the relative scholarship. Also Mart. 7.12 refers immediately to a dominus (as a direct judge of Martial's reputation). Martial (like Ovid) was very proud of being read in the most remote places of the Empire.

the crisis of that role.

Both Ovid and Martial portray the "dark side" of the relationship between literary production, authorship, textual diffusion, patronage and the author's material support in their age.

In both cases such relations are exposed and discussed because they are endangered: Ovid's prestige is undercut by banishment; Martial's authorship, in the poems I mentioned, by plagiarism.

Both representations are no less fictional and no less one-sided than – say – Horace's positive picture of a world of literary circles based on pure *amicitia*[21]. The representations given by Ovid and Martial are partly determined by literary motives, connected with the rules of *genres* such as "sad" elegy and "lowly" epigram, but they are also influenced by the new social and cultural scenario of the early empire: the two authors simply use exile and poverty as metaphors to elaborate upon a reflection on the weak points of patronage and on the relationship between literature and society. Their reflection is precious for us; not less valuable because sophisticated, but – I would dare to say – even more so because of their literary sophistication.

2.4 The ancient model's weak points

In a context without copyright, patronage is the only actual way for poets to gain social status and financial support. But the weak link in the circle connecting audience, patron and author is the relationship between *patronus* and *cliens*. A nobleman, an influential member of the imperial court and especially an emperor may be expected, but not *compelled* to support an artist.

Ovid shows that after the establishment of the Augustan regime politics and ideology may interfere heavily and disrupt the balance of patronage. His exile poetry stages the tragic paradox of a poet still very successful who is absurdly deprived of his social status, of any social acknowledgement and even of direct contact with his audience, for political reasons.

Martial depicts the whimsical nature of the economic relationship between patron and client. He does so in a number of ways – humorous, gloomy, caricatural, over-realistic – but always with a layer of witty literary elaboration. Martial was most probably not as penniless as his poetic *persona*, but his literary play on poverty, his witty play on plagiarism and false attributions, his commodification of literature, his hyperbolic representation of the scarce appreciation of literature in the new *élites* and in Roman society in general discuss a real problem in a literary manner.

Many authors of the early imperial age dealt with these issues from different angles. I shall confine myself to a brief mention of Petronius' *Satyricon*, where figures such as Agamemnon and Eumolpus embody the degradation of literary culture[22].

Agamemnon is a teacher of rhetoric, Eumolpus a poet. Both have very noble feelings about literature and culture. Agamemnon elaborates and even versifies a keen analysis of the moral roots of the corruption of education and rhetoric, but some chapters later, to our greatest surprise, we find him sitting at Trimalchio's dinner table like an ordinary parasite. Eumolpus is a much more complex figure. Suffice it to say here that he too is an intellectual capable of sophisticated discussions on art, yet is morally despicable, not entirely sane – and ultimately a poor poet. But above all, they are disconnected from their society. Agamemnon laments the different views on education existing between him and his pupils' parents. As to Eumolpus, as soon as we make his acquaintance, he is stoned by the bystanders who have listened to his poem on the fall of Troy (Petr. Sat. 90: <…> *ex*

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[21] Martial, for instance, also has epigrams where he represents the "bright side" of patronage (see Roman).
[22] Also other characters do: Encolpius is a literate too. But they do it in a more complex and indirect way: see Conte, The hidden author and "il narratore mitomane".

is, qui in porticibus spatiabantur, lapides in Eumolpum recitantem miserunt).

They embody a narcissistic and ster*i*le model of culture that has nothing to say to society perfectly, but at the same time the "high" culture represented by these intellectuals that seems not to be understood by a degraded social environment.

One of the many issues that emerge here, as well as in the *Cena Trimalchionis*, is the difficulty of high level culture, "ni*che*" culture, particularly literature, to hold appeal for the wide public.

3. New models

After discussing the ancient model, let us take into account the modern and contemporary framework.

3.1 Print publishers

After the general establishment of the copyright model for published texts, the relationship between audience and author has been mediated by commercial publishers. The pattern is very simple: the publisher has an exclusive control of the technology of print and has a legal right to control the copy and distribution system. It collects the money from the readers and hands over a part of the profits to the author.

3.2 Spontaneous digital models

In the contemporary era, the audience owns the technology necessary for the reproduction of digital music, videos, texts, books and other creations of intellectual activity. This makes copyright practically unenforceable.

New models of interaction between author, work and audience have spontaneously arisen in the new digital scenario:

1. The "peer-to-peer" model, where the author and the traditional publisher theoretically retain copyright, but a large share of the overall distribution of artistic creations actually takes place through large scale exchanges among the users, with a complete exclusion of both author and publisher. In the Nineties this model heavily affected the music and film market. If e-books have a larger diffusion in the next few years, as it seem plausible given the evolution of e-book reader hardware, a similar development in the field of literary texts is expectable. In this model, however, the audience is technologically self-sufficient for the circulation of extant works, but there is no incentive to support and foster new artistic creation;

2. The "advertisement" model, where the audience is provided free content or a free service accompanied by advertisement. The flow of money runs roughly as follows: the audience pays the advertised companies indirectly through increased purchases; the companies pay a digital intermediary like Google; the intermediary pays the author directly or through further intermediaries.

3. The "community" model, where the content is created by the users, and therefore the audience overlaps with the author. The basic idea is that of a creative community sharing freely the products of its intellectual activity. Examples include the so-called Web 2.0 or the whole Open Source and Open Access movements. This model works

particularly well with new, natively digital textual forms, such as discussion groups, forums and especially wikis.

The "peer-to-peer" model is dysfunctional due to the lack of opportunity for professional artists. The "advertisement" model may produce too little profits to support more complex textual and artistic productions. The "community" model requires a large number of non-professional authors sharing workload on a voluntary basis, but some kinds of products – such as an album, a film, a novel, or a structured scientific essay – may require full-time professional figures.

3.3 Future digital models

So other models have been developed, including the following:

1. The "donations" model, where the audience funds the author directly and on a voluntary basis. To make two popular examples, both Wikipedia and most Linux software development follow this model;

2. The "digital intermediary" model – the one implemented by "iTunes", for example. After focussing – obviously to no avail – on the repression of "illegal downloads", some corporations, including Apple, have changed their strategy and now offer the audience a positive alternative to file sharing. "Why should I pay Apple for something – a song or an e-book – that I can have for free through file sharing?" Just because the process is handier. Systems like iTunes, Ovi store, Amazon, Google e-books etc. collect the resources, organise and categorise them, and check their technical standards. Furthermore, integrated systems like the Apple environment provides a smooth integration between different hardware devices, software, and human beings. All this makes the actual process easier and less time-consuming for the audience.

The latter model requires an intermediary that puts audience and author in contact. In the commercial variant represented, for example, by iTunes or Amazon, the intermediary works much like the traditional publisher, in that it collects money directly from the audience and redistributes it to the authors, while granting authorship acknowledgement[23].

A fundamental difference, however, makes this model innovative with respect to the print publisher one, and makes it more similar to the pre-Gutenberg situation that we have seen in ancient Rome.

Although copyright is still formally in force in our legal system, the "iTunes" model focusses on the copy process, not on the copyright. Formally, when I buy from iTunes I am still paying for the copyright too, but the actual central reason why I am choosing it over file-sharing is that the process is simply handier[24].

In this respect the commercial "digital intermediary" works much more like an ancient

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[23] An interesting trend must be noted, however: business models are arising where a single user is provided unlimited access to digital resources for a monthly fee. Ovi Store has launched such a plan for music. Such model seems to me a quite natural evolution in a framework where digital reproduction of resources is potentially unlimited and viral by nature.

[24] Rather than browsing for minutes, checking for fakes, renaming the file, checking the tags, converting it into another format, sticking my usb-pen into my laptop, taking it out, and then sticking it back into my my e-book reader, I, like a percentage of the audience will freely pay a few Pounds (or Euros, if one lives on the wrong side of the Channel) to have the right eBook catalogued in my library and available in all my devices with a couple of clicks.

librarius than like a modern print publisher. When an ancient Roman went to a *taberna libraria* to buy Martial's books, he did not do it because he could not make a copy of them on his own, that is because he did not have the legal right or the technology necessary to do it. He did it because he found it more convenient, on that occasion, to rely on a professional service specialised in the copying process (see Mart. 1.117).

Another variant of the "intermediary" model may include the intervention of support fom outside the market, possibly public, to a specific kind of publication that would not be marketable, but is of public interest[25]. Examples might include specialised research essays. A system where universities and research centres support the researchers and the digital publication of their essays would secure both the survival of this kind of textual production and its broad diffusion.

3.4 Conclusion

Obviously, none of the models we have discussed so far is without flaws.

In the literature of early imperial Rome, Ovid first revealed the political and ideological issues of imperial patronage; Martial exposed the whimsical nature of patronage as an informal and unstable socio-economic interaction and the risks connected with authorship acknowledgement [26].

In the copyright-based book market model, a problematic aspect has always been reconciling the commercial need to please a broad audience and the aesthetic need to foster literary quality, originality and experimentation.

In the digital age, the "peer-to-peer" model disconnects the author from the audience. Advertisement profits and community collaboration may fall short of the specific needs of some intellectual enterprises.

The "donations" model suffers from the same drawbacks that Martial lamented: the instability and whimsicality of the link between the funder and the funded. However, while for poets like Martial the "dispersal" of patronage among a great number of contacts reduced the responsibility of each of them and therefore increased their sense of precariousness, in the digital world the dimension of a community of potential supporters may become big enough to make donations a statistically reliable source of income. Much, however, depends on the diffusion of a specific digital community culture.

The model envisioning public funding of cultural activities is obviously subject to the variables of changing cultural policies, but may be necessary for specific kinds of "esoteric" publications.

The "commercial digital intermediary" model – what I call the "iTunes" model – also has an issue still open today. As in the ancient patronage model, the "weak link" here are the terms of the relationship between the digital intermediary and the author. For this aspect both legal and commercial standards are still under definition, as shown, for example, by the Writers Guild of America strike in 2007-2008 over the profits derived from online propagation of TV shows, or the legal disputes about Google Books and Google News.

In the next years the digital revolution is likely to affect the diffusion of books and literature more substantially, as it has already with music and films. Probably different models will be applied to different kinds of texts – a wiki is very different from a novel. But whatever models will

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[25] This is already the case today with public funding of "niche" cinema or of opera theatres in some nations.

[26] Petronius portrayed the difficulty of the social acknowledgement of cultural values.

become dominant, they will have to to fulfil two basic requirements:

1. first, they must be integrated in a new technological scenario where copyright as we know it is destined to fade;

2. second, they must define a new relationship between author, work and audience preserving authorship acknowledgement and effectively supporting and fostering artistic and literary creativity.