

Reading Frontinus in Martial *Epigrams*¹

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Frontinus and Martial make an unlikely pair in a volume on literary interactions. Frontinus is best known today as the author of a dutiful and rather arid administrative treatise on the management of Rome's aqueduct network (the *De Aquis*), a text that seems worlds apart from Martial's ludic, provocative poetry. His other surviving texts are also in the administrative/technical vein,² and have tended to be overlooked in (excluded from?) studies of Flavian, Nerva and Trajanic literature on the grounds, presumably, that they are hardly 'literary' enough to count.³ Yet as one of contemporary Rome's most influential statesmen (he was awarded a rare third consulship in 100, probably in recognition of the role he had played in securing Nerva's adoption of Trajan⁴), Frontinus knew, served alongside, patronised, and even enjoyed literary leisure time with some of the most celebrated authors of the day. His writings, on such important topics as military expertise, land management and Rome's water supply, also seem to have been reasonably well known. In fact, they occasionally became points of reference around which other authors defined some of their literary, social and political positions.

We have seen a little of Pliny's engagement with Frontinus – both statesman and author – in the introduction to this volume. Frontinus features in both the *Epistles* (4.8, 5.1 and 9.19) and the *Panegyricus* (61-2) as a social and political benchmark against which Pliny can measure himself and others; and some of Frontinus' writing may factor into this – even when no explicit mention of it is made – in ways that sharpen or develop the comparisons which Pliny is trying to draw. As I have argued elsewhere, Frontinus' self-presentation in the *De Aquis* adds an extra dimension to the role that readers (might) see him playing in Tacitus' contemporary *Agricola* (17.2), as an alternative senatorial paradigm who bridges the divide between 'Flavian' and 'post-Domitianic' in ways that *Agricola* cannot.⁵ And the Greek author Aelianus Tacticus identified Frontinus and his military treatises as important landmarks, both in the personal story behind his composition of a new *Tactical Theory* and in a wider debate about the continuing value of Greek theory/science in a world conquered by Rome: Frontinus figures in that text (pr. 2 and 1.2) not just as an influential patron but as the representative of a Roman military writing tradition whose inferiority to its

¹ I am grateful to John Henderson, Victoria Rimell, Christopher Whitton and the audience at the first Literary Interactions conference in St Andrews for their generous and incisive comments on earlier drafts of this article.

² A treatise on Roman land surveying, preserved in the *Corpus Agrimensorum Romanorum* (accessibly presented in Campbell 2000; see also Thulin 1913); and the *Strategemata*, a four-book collection of strategic *exempla*. Frontinus' now lost *De re militari* is known only from *Strat.* 1.pr.1.

³ The latest overview of Flavian Rome is a case in point: Frédéric Hurlet's survey of Flavian 'sources' near the start of the 2016 Wiley-Blackwell *Companion to the Flavian Age of Imperial Rome* does not even consider Frontinus as an author 'worthy of passing mention' (how it describes Quintilian), and Frontinus barely gets a look-in elsewhere in that volume, or in Boyle and Dominik 2003, let alone in more specialist readings of Flavian and Trajanic literature.

⁴ Syme 1958: 16-7; Eck 2002: 219-26. Frontinus may even have been involved in Nerva's succession (Grainger 2003: 14, 100).

⁵ A. König 2013: 370-6.

Greek counterpart Aelian is determined to assert.⁶ In his *Strategemata*, Frontinus engages in some literary interactivity with the likes of Cato the Elder and Valerius Maximus, and treats the theme of civil war (inter alia) in ways that invite comparison with several Flavian and post-Flavian texts (particularly Silius Italicus' *Punica*).⁷ The *De Aquis*, meanwhile, references (among others) Cicero, Virgil, Horace, Livy and Statius.⁸ Frontinus' embeddedness in Roman literary culture should not be underestimated, in other words; indeed, it was the network of interactions – personal, social, political and literary – that can be traced between him and some of the currently better known authors and patrons of his day that inspired this volume.⁹

This chapter is an attempt to unpick just one strand of that web – a strand that centres around the same extraordinary historical window (Nerva's transitional principate) with which several other chapters are concerned. Earlier in this volume Victoria Rimell explores the convergences and potential interplay between another pair of texts that (like the *De Aquis*) were polished off and published in 97-98: Martial's tenth book of *Epigrams* (2nd ed.) and Tacitus' *Agricola*.¹⁰ Like the *De Aquis/Epigrams 10* duo, these two texts look very different from each other, and they are rarely read in close dialogue as a result. There are correspondences, however, which make for a productive experiment in parallel reading and raise important questions about literary interactivity at the level of consumption, not just composition. My own discussion will consider some hazy topical overlaps (more interdiscursivity than intertextuality) and the role played by readers (ancient and modern) in bringing diverse texts into conversation with each other. Unlike Rimell (and Roy Gibson, in his dialogue between Pliny and Plutarch at the other end of this volume), I am not restricted only to the exploration of suggestive connections, however; I have the luxury of being able to follow up some overt interactions. My chapter particularly homes in on two occasions in *Epigrams 10* where Frontinus is explicitly called up by Martial's pen.

In both cases, Martial appears to be invoking the (states)man, not his writings; but the two are not so easy to disentangle, as we will see, and that raises methodological as well as interpretative questions. I will argue that aspects of Frontinus' *De Aquis* (almost certainly in circulation – but how widely? – when Martial is editing *Epigrams 10*) potentially lurk in the background of the verses in 10.48 and 10.58 where Frontinus is talked of, poised to invest Martial's words with extra significance. But I will also consider what is at stake when we choose to read these references to Frontinus as invitations/opportunities to bring some of his own writing alongside and into dialogue with Martial's poetry. Does cross-pollination with the *De Aquis* enrich, over-egg or constrict our understanding of Martial's politics? What difference does it make to our understanding of Martial's poetics – and the wider literary culture in which he, Frontinus, Tacitus and their contemporaries were writing? Does it require us to adjust our notions of (ancient and modern) reading habits and reading communities? In what ways might it affect our responses to

⁶ I discuss Aelian's interactions with Frontinus (and Trajan), and Arrian's follow-on interactions with Aelian (and Hadrian) in the second *Literary Interactions* volume (fthc.).

⁷ A. König fthc.

⁸ Baldwin 1994: 503-4.

⁹ Plutarch is also part of this web: one of his regular addressees, Sosius Senecio, was Frontinus' son-in-law. Indeed, it would have come as no surprise had Frontinus put in an appearance in the dialogue which is the subject of Roy Gibson's chapter in this volume.

¹⁰ On the likely date of the *De Aquis*, published shortly after Nerva appointed Frontinus to the post of *curator aquarum* in 97, see especially Rodgers 2004: 5-8.

Frontinus and his works? And how does it contribute to our picture of literary, social and political (inter)activity more generally in 97-98? Frontinus' social and political prominence (and Martial's emphasis on that, more than on Frontinus' authorial endeavours) will prompt scrutiny of the disjunctions and overlaps between personal and textual interactions, a recurring theme of this volume.¹¹ The 'un-literary' nature of the *De Aquis* will trigger reflections on boundaries and cross-fertilisation between conventionally 'literary' and 'less literary' genres (at the point of reception, as well as production).¹² And analysis of obscure, almost invisible, indefinite nods in (inter)textual directions alongside clearer, more direct verbal echoes will feed into the wider picture which this volume is building up of the varied and complex nature of the dialogues which contemporary authors entered into with each other and their readers.

Reading Frontinus in Martial's *Epigrams* is thus an opportunity to probe many of the issues at the heart of this volume. But it is also a bid to involve Frontinus – so often marginalised – in future discussions of the literature of this period. Indeed, in unpicking the role that he and his texts sometimes played in other authors' (and their readers') responses to the world in which they were writing, I hope to show how appreciation of that role – and of those interactions – can deepen our understanding of late-Flavian, Nervan and early-Trajanic literary culture.

10.48

Nuntiat octavam Phariae sua turba iuvencae, et pilata redit iamque subitque cohors. temperat haec thermas, nimios prior hora vapores halat, et immodico sexta Nerone calet.	
Stella, Nepos, Cani, Cerialis, Flacce, venitis?	5
septem sigma capit, sex sumus, adde Lupum. exoneraturas ventrem mihi vilica malvas attulit et varias quas habet hortus opes, in quibus est lactuca sedens et tonsile porrum, nec deest ructatrix mentha nec herba salax;	10
secta coronabunt rutatos ova lacertos et madidum thynni de sale sumen erit. gustus in his; una ponetur cenula mensa: haedus inhumani raptus ab ore lupi, et quae non egeant ferro structoris ofellae et faba fabrorum prototomique rudes;	15
pullus ad haec cenisque tribus iam perna superstes addetur. saturis mitia poma dabo, de Nomentana vinum sine faece lagona, quae bis Frontino consule trima fuit.	20
accedent sine felle ioci nec mane timenda libertas et nil quod tacuisse velis: de prasino conviva meus Scorpoque loquatur, nec facient quemquam pocula nostra reum.	

The eighth hour is announced to the Pharian heifer by her band of devotees and with that, one javelin-wielding cohort returns to camp as

¹¹ My discussion intersects particularly with Mratschek and Kelly's contributions.

¹² This is something which the chapters of Harries and Lavan bring to the fore.

another takes its place. This hour tempers the heat of the baths, the one before exhales too much steam, and the sixth burns with Neronian excess. Stella, Nepos, Canius, Cerialis, Flaccus, are you coming? The couch takes seven; we are six; add Lupus. My steward's wife has brought me mallows that unburden the stomach and sundry fruits of the garden. Among them, languid lettuce and snipped-off leeks; there is no shortage, either, of belching mint or the saucy herb; sliced eggs will garland mackerels seasoned with rue and there will be breast of sow, drenched in fishy-brine. These will serve as tastings. My little dinner will be set out in just one course: a kid snatched from the jaws of a beastly wolf, plus titbits of the kind that need no cutting up, plus workman's beans and uncultivated young greens; a chicken and ham-leftovers from three dinners past will add to the pile. When every one has had their fill, I shall offer ripe apples and a wine (with no dregs) from a Nomentan flagon which turned six years old during Frontinus' consulship.¹³ Jollity (with no bitterness to it) will accompany all that; there will be none of the frank free-speaking that causes anxiety the next morning, there will be nothing said which you might wish unsaid. Let my guests talk of the Greens and of Scorpus; heaven forbid that my drinks should get anyone put on trial.

Frontinus makes his first appearance in Martial about half way through *Epigrams* 10, that double-edged book that was first issued under Domitian in 96 and then revised and republished under Trajan at the end of 98. In 10.48 Martial reworks a familiar trope, the dinner party invitation, to assemble a group of poets and patrons for a supper of home-grown leaves, mackerel and chopped eggs, sow's udder soaked in tunny-sauce, a young goat 'snatched from the jaws of an inhuman wolf', meat morsels, workmen's beans, course young greens, a chicken, and a three-day-old ham. The makeshift, muddled nature of this feast complements ideas touched upon in the preceding poem (and elsewhere), where Martial identifies components of the happy life, including 'land that is not unyielding' and a table *sine arte* ('without finesse').¹⁴ But, as Emily Gowers has shown, the food in this poem (as in many of Martial's *Epigrams*) also serves as a metaphor for Martial's poetic style, celebrating his crude, salacious wit, the festive licence that tumbles through his books, and his penchant for surprising readers with a jumble of seeming inconsistencies.¹⁵

The table set, Martial looks ahead to what he will serve his sated guests for dessert (18-20): ripe fruit (*mitia poma*) and wine without sediment from a Nomentan flagon (*de Nomentana vinum sine faece lagona*), which turned twice three years old in the year of Frontinus' consulship (*quae bis Frontino consule trima fuit*). For most commentators, this reference to Frontinus simply helps Martial draw attention to the age of his wine.¹⁶ I suggest, however, that Frontinus' presence in the poem raises questions about dates and dating that extend well beyond the comestible. Indeed, Martial's mention of him, like his description of the dishes that the wine will accompany, prompts reflection on the nature of Martial's poetry, and in particular upon the age – or the vintage – of the poems that make up the second edition of

¹³ On Heinsius' conjecture of *trima* for the *prima* of the MSS, see Housman 1907 (Diggle & Goodyear 1972: 728-9). If *prima* were right, *bis* (as a substitute for *iterum*) would apply not to *trima* (as in my translation) but to *Frontino consule*, meaning (implausibly) '...a Nomentan flagon which was first bottled (?) during (or after?) Frontinus' second consulship.'

¹⁴ Spisak 2002: 137.

¹⁵ Gowers 1993: 245-64.

¹⁶ E.g. Peachin 2004: 158.

Epigrams 10.¹⁷ In addition – if Martial’s mention of Frontinus also points readers to the aqueduct treatise which Frontinus had recently been writing (as I argue it might) – it invites comparison of Martial’s work with wider contemporary literary trends, and in particular one that Frontinus’ own text embodies (as does Tacitus’ *Agricola*): the celebration of Nervan/Trajanic reforms, indeed of a new political era – set alongside implicit acknowledgment that some of the impurities of the past continue to plague the present.¹⁸

Time is made to matter in the poem right from the start. The eighth hour is announced before we discover anything else; and it brings with it both closure (of the Temple of Isis, v. 1) and change-over (v. 2), as one cohort returns to camp and another comes out on duty. The next two verses elaborate on the merits of Martial’s chosen hour, emphasising its relative coolness in comparison with the steamy seventh hour and scorching sixth. This helps Martial to set not just the scene but also the tone for the dinner party to which – in verse 5 – he invites his literary guests: it proclaims a preference for temperateness generally and a rejection of anything that is drainingly, or even dangerously, hot. But his weighing up of time here does not just contribute to the construction of Martial’s poetic persona; it also contains a political subtext.

The ‘Nero’ of verse 4 is shorthand, of course, for Nero’s Baths, and re-spins Martial’s clock-watching as a quick tour of the bathhouse (from temperate *tepidarium* to the steamy *laconicum* – sweat-room – and then on to the sweltering *caldarium*). Martial’s glossing of *Nerone* as *immodico* also inevitably evokes the emperor himself¹⁹ – and that invites us to look for political allusions in the rest of the passage. When one does, the language of *temperantia* particularly jumps out (celebrated as a key Trajanic virtue in Pliny’s *Panegyricus*, for instance²⁰). In this light, the three hours that Martial foregrounds begin to resemble (perhaps) Rome’s three imperial dynasties, in reverse chronological order (why count backwards like this, unless to prompt reflection on chronological trajectories?). The sixth, that smoulders with immoderate Neronian heat, conjures up the Julio-Claudians, who self-combusted in the wake of some sizzling imperial antics and a very real fire (think, too, of representations of Nero as the sun – the sixth hour was when the sun was at its height).²¹ The seventh, with its excess of steam, represents the Flavians, who rose to

¹⁷ 10.48 reuses many titbits (*faba, haedus, ova, pulli, perna*, etc) from the *Xenia* (i.e. Martial’s juvenilia), which also plays with the tracking/manipulation of time; cf. esp. 13.119, for another carefully-weighed/aged Nomentan vintage. (I am grateful to Victoria Rimell for pointing me in this direction.)

¹⁸ The *De Aquis* opens with a eulogy of Nerva’s devotion to the state and bursts with reformative zeal. The continuity of mal-administration, corruption and theft is a recurring theme, however (*Aq.* 31-34; 65-67; 72-73; 75-76; 91), and the treatise closes with a warning from Frontinus to future law-flouters (*Aq.* 130). On the emphasis which Frontinus places on fraud and mismanagement, see Evans 1994, 57-8; Cuomo 2000, 193-4; Peachin 2004, 109-13 and Appendix 7. For broader readings of the treatise: DeLaine 1995; Del Chicca 1995; A. König 2007.

¹⁹ Cf., e.g., *Ep.* 7.34, where Nero and his baths are explicitly compared; also Tac. *Ann.* 15.23, where Nero’s reaction to the birth and death of his daughter is characterized as *immodicus*. As Gowers 1993: 256 puts it, ‘Nero’s baths loom over the dinner like an immoderate tyrant.’

²⁰ See, e.g., Pliny *Pan.* 2, 10, 41, 55, 76, 79, 80, 82 (where Trajan behaves with admirable *temperantia/temperamentum*), and also 3 where *temperamentum* characterizes the new register which the Senate must adopt in addressing Trajan.

²¹ Balland 2010: 88: ‘l’expression *immodico... Nerone...* peut rappeler qu’au milieu de l’année 64 (où Martial arriva à Rome) les chrétiens, accusés d’être coupables de

power amid the flames of civil war and whose last incumbent had a particularly fiery reputation (for book burning, *inter alia*).²² And the eighth, which tempers the heat of what has gone before (and also marks the slide towards the end of the day?), embodies (perhaps) the present regime, cool and calming – at least in comparison. Quotidian time reframed as epochal time.²³

On this basis, one might go back and make deductions from the opening pair of verses. The cult of Isis (conjured up by the Pharian heifer) seems to have been especially popular with the Flavian emperors, and connected to Domitian above all,²⁴ so the temple's closure (triggered by the striking of the new hour) might signal the end of Domitian's reign. The change-over of cohorts, meanwhile, perhaps evokes a hand-over of command at the imperial/dynastic level – although (and this is a point we will come back to) one body of men is replaced here by another of identical appearance (a feature emphasised by the fact that *redit* and *subitque* share the same subject, the singular *pilata... cohors*). Martial's characterisation of the hour for his dinner party thus teases us with the possibility (probability?) that this epigram is not just about food, Martial-style, and its literary meaning, but also about regime-change – a theme that is particularly topical, of course, for the second, revised edition of Book 10. If we choose to follow up the hints embedded in vv. 1-4, we understand that the feast to which Martial's guests are invited will start at the eighth hour *in the age of Trajan*.

Age is then a recurring theme in the description of food that follows. A kid and fresh young greens (primitive, even: these *prototomi*, the first-cut leaves, are *rudes*) contrast with ripe apples and 'a ham that has already survived three dinners' (17).²⁵ Its placement at the end of a line (paralleling the position of *rudes* in the verse above) draws attention to the word *superstes*, which we have met once already in the book, in *Epigram* 10.2, where Martial celebrates the likely immortality of his poetry:

... quem cum mihi Roma dedisset,
 'nil tibi quod demus maius habemus' ait.
 'pigra per hunc fugies ingratae flumina Lethes
 et meliore tui parte superstes eris.
 marmora Messallae findit caprificus et audax
 dimidios Crispi mulio ridet equos:
 at chartis nec furta nocent et saecula prosunt,
 solaque non norunt haec monumenta mori.' (10.2.5-12)

l'incendie de la Ville, brûlèrent transformés en torches vivantes; les jardins de l'empereur, au Vatican, furent ainsi symboliquement et atrocement illuminés.'

²² Of course, Domitian was credited with restoring some of the buildings – including libraries – that burnt down during various fires (Suet. *Dom.* 5 and 20); but he was also associated with tyrannical uses of fire against opponents and writers (Suet. *Dom.* 10; Tac. *Ag.* 2).

²³ As Victoria Rimell and Christopher Whitton both pointed out to me, if we read Martial's hour-by-hour scheme in vv. 3-4 (too) literally we end up with an unusually early dinner-time (2pm) – an oddity striking enough, perhaps, to make readers look closely at what Martial is up to here. While we are counting, it is worth noting the numbers at v. 6 (*sex sumus*), where Lupus (Wolf-man, who comes to gobble the kid that was snatched from the jaws of an inhuman *lupus*, v. 14) makes seven.

²⁴ Jones 1992: 101; Tac. *Hist.* 3.74; Suet. *Dom.* 1.2 and 5; Dio 66.24.2.

²⁵ On that unlucky kid: being snatched from the jaws of a wolf is proverbially unlikely (cf. Pl. *Poen.* 776), one of many hints that we should read this dinner party as a grotesque kind of fantasy (that overwrites Catullus 13 among other models). Thanks again to Victoria Rimell for nudging me on this.

...[Reader,] when Rome gave you to me she declared: 'I have nothing greater than what I now give you. Through him you will escape the sluggish streams of thankless Lethe and the better part of you will live on. The fig tree causes cracks in Messalla's marble and the cocky mule-driver laughs at Crispus' crumbling horses. But thefts do no harm to my volumes and the passing of centuries benefits them. These are the only monuments that do not taste death.

The comparison which Martial draws here between the fate of his poetic monuments (which will escape death) and that of physical memorials (which disintegrate over time) does not simply channel Horace *Odes* 3.30, among other texts:²⁶ it evokes also the destruction of statues and erasure of inscriptions that accompanied the recent demise of Domitian²⁷ – and in so doing returns us to the theme of political *rewriting* with which *Epigram* 10.2 begins. For 10.2.1-4, of course, announce that what we are reading is a revision: it is a book that has been recalled (*nunc revocavit*), trimmed back with an up-to-date file (*lima rasa recenti*), and renewed in large part (*pars nova maior erit*).

Some commentators read awkward back-tracking and anxious re-positioning in Martial's decision to reissue *Epigrams* 10; it has been seen as an acknowledgement that his praise of Domitian might make him unpopular with the new dynasty and an attempt to reinvent himself as a poet who will appeal to a Trajanic readership.²⁸ But this interpretation overlooks the obvious irony inherent in his juxtaposition in 10.2 of that declaration of renewal with the claim a few lines later that his poetry cannot be destroyed (a claim which gains extra piquancy if read in dialogue with Tacitus' use of the word *superstes* at *Ag.* 3.2 and 46.4²⁹). Running through his introduction to the second edition, in other words, is a tacit acknowledgement that, though cut out, the poems of his first edition still (and always will) survive. Martial did not need to republish *Epigrams* 10; he had already published book 11, whose opening few poems hail Nerva's accession,³⁰ and he could have left 10, as he left books 1 to 9, to fade from view (or continue to circulate) in its original state. Arguably, his republication draws attention not to his new Trajanic identity but to the very difficulty of forging one, to the challenge that faced authors who ended up straddling these two, supposedly distinct political eras. Indeed, it draws attention to Martial's (deliberate?) failure (after the tentative efforts of *Epigrams* 11) to reinvent/re-present himself substantially. Even as it introduces a revised, Trajanic-era edition, 10.2 reminds readers that traces of the old will (always) linger amid the new.³¹

The word *superstes*, then, conjures up a political problem: for being a 'survivor' (or a 'left-over') in AD 98 is (as Tacitus' *Agricola* synchronically emphasised) a complicated position. Martial's use of the same word in 10.48 to

²⁶ Also Ovid (*Amores*, 1.15.41-2; 3.15.19-20; *Met.* 15.871-9), as Rimell 2009: 68-71 and Hardie 2012: 327-9 discuss.

²⁷ Fitzgerald 2007: 158; Rimell 2009: 71-2; Hardie 2012: 329.

²⁸ E.g. Coleman 1998: 338-9, 355; Spisak 2002.

²⁹ On which, see Rimell's analysis earlier in this volume, [XXX14-15](#).

³⁰ On the complexity of Martial's engagement with Nerva ideology in *Ep.* 11, see esp. Fearnley 2003: 622-6; Rimell 2009: 162-4; and Morello in this volume.

³¹ Cf. *Ep.* 12.4, where Martial draws attention to the parallel existence of different (abridged and unabridged) versions of books 10 and 11. On the ways in which books 10-12 complicate (or collapse) distinctions between Flavian past and Nerva/Trajanic present, see also Henderson 2001: 81-2; Rimell 2009: 67-8; Hardie 2012: 329; Fowler 1995: 209; Fitzgerald 2007: 158-160.

characterise a ham might look innocuous but it calls 10.2 to mind, not least because the food at this dinner party invites readers to reflect on the kind of poetry that Martial is writing. (Just how appetising are left-overs? Some things taste best fresh, others benefit from maturity; has Martial's meat gained in flavour – or has it deteriorated? Jarring notes in his description of the choice morsels that he is serving up make us wonder quite how palatable any of it is – and, indeed, whether any of it is quite what it seems...³²). A subtext about literary recycling and the wider context of imperial *saecula-risation* is thus woven into the menu of 10.48 – a subtext which Frontinus' appearance helps to bring out.

Two whole verses are devoted to Martial's description of the wine, more than for any other single item at the feast: we are meant to look closely at it. And the elaborate phrasing of verse 20 prompts us to think particularly hard about its age. *Bis* applies to *trima* (though that is not immediately obvious),³³ making the wine six years old during Frontinus' consulship. But which one? His first, in 73 (in which case the wine would have been maturing for nearly thirty years), or his second, in 98, to which the juxtaposition of *bis* with *Frontino consule* teasingly points us (in which case we are looking at a wine that is still young, perhaps even immature³⁴)? The answer presumably is both (as so often in the *Epigrams*, and particularly in Martial's epoch-straddling *Epigrams* 10). Martial's (enigmatic and eye-catching) description of his wine draws attention not just to the past (the time during which the wine has been maturing) but also to the present (and to what Frontinus is up to right now).

In 98 Frontinus was not only emerging as one of Rome's leading senators: he was closely connected with both Nerva and Trajan, and may even have been viewed (not least because he was busy parading himself thus in the *De Aquis*) as something of a poster boy for the new regime.³⁵ Allusion to his second consulship, then, places Martial's dinner party (and the epigram itself: it is one of the few in book 10 that we can securely identify as belonging to the second edition³⁶) firmly in the Trajanic 'new age' – especially if we can assume that mention of Frontinus in 98 will trigger thought of his recent role as *curator aquarum* and perhaps also the aqueduct treatise which that post inspired him to write. The phrase *sine faece* ('without dregs') in verse 19 may even reinforce a Nerva/Trajanic vibe. For it could be read as a witty allusion to Frontinus' recurring concern in the *De Aquis* with purification and transparency, a concern that allies him with the new dynasty's rhetoric of reform.³⁷ When coupled with

³² Why *lactuca sedens*, for instance? Or *ructatrix mentha*? Or *exoneraturus ventrem...malvas*, for that matter, unless to provoke some double-takes (regurgitation) and even disgust in the reader?

³³ Housman 1907: 252-3 (Diggle & Goodyear 1972: 729). Cf. n. **XXX13**.

³⁴ At 10.49.3 Martial connects the youth (as well as the provenance) of a wine with poor quality: the 'leaden' Sabine wine is *modo conditum* (recently laid down).

³⁵ Take its opening paragraph (*Aq.* 1), for instance, where the verbal parallels which Frontinus establishes between his and Nerva's *diligentia* and *amor* for the state proclaim their shared ethos, even their partnership. The *De Aquis* is – among other things – an exercise in showing that Nerva and Trajan's re-empowerment of Rome's beleaguered senatorial elite was underway and working well (A. König 2007).

³⁶ Peachin 2004: 157; Balland 2010: 87.

³⁷ Frontinus spends a considerable amount of time in the *De Aquis* claiming credit (which he shares strategically with the emperor) for cleansing various aqueducts of noxious sediments, weeding out corrupt water men and problems with waste, and

Frontinus' name, in other words (and thanks to the ideas which reference to his political career and possible interplay with his most recent publication together conjure up), the absence of lees in the flagon helps to give Martial's choice of wine a particularly (early-)Trajanic 'flavour'.

However, verse 20 also makes it clear that the wine has been maturing during the Flavian dynasty, having been laid down some time before 98 (if not before 73). It thus crosses political eras – and in so doing embodies a message about Martial's poetry and the times in which he was writing. For, if the laxative mallow and burping mint symbolise the provocative crudity of his humour, and the hotchpotch of hors d'oeuvres (served all in one go) draws attention to the sometimes incongruous variety of his collected epigrams, the hybrid nature of the wine reminds us that the book we are reading is itself (inevitably) a Flavian-Trajanic blend. It may (like the contents of Martial's Nomentan flagon, and Frontinus' career for that matter) have taken on a new dimension with the accession of Nerva and Trajan, but its foundations were laid in the previous regime – and not even the removal of unwanted 'dross' will alter that. (Another intersection with Frontinus' *De Aquis* might occur here. For all its talk of cleansing and the eradication of corruption, the treatise makes it clear that Rome's aqueducts – and Rome itself – continue to be plagued by problems that originated in previous political eras. There is continuity, not just change. Indeed, the continuity of pre-Trajanic problems is the driving force of the treatise, and – alongside the rhetoric of reform – the foundation on which Frontinus' authority is built.³⁸)

It is not simply that a residue of the old lingers on in the new (despite judicious sieving), then; this Flavian vintage, that is being served at the start of Trajan's principate, reminds us that the past is often an integral basis of the present. Martial's dating of the wine in 10.48 thus returns us to a tension that we saw picked out in 10.2 between (supposed) political change and poetic continuity. Moreover, together with the closing verses of the epigram (when wine leads us on to boozy talk) it also invites speculation about political continuity.

For much of 10.48, we (like Martial's guests) are transported to the sanctuary of a private home, whose detachment from public life is underlined by references to the outside world in the frame of the poem. Gowers has argued that the 'convivial licence' of Martial's dinner couch is contrasted with the 'threatened liberty' of this wider world only at the epigram's 'furthest margins', in verses 1-2 and 24.³⁹ But Martial's mention of Frontinus ensures that politics intrudes well before the poem (and the party) have begun to wrap up. Indeed, his evocation of AD 98 and the imperial upheavals that surrounded it overshadows the epigram's final four lines, and in so doing alerts us to the possibility that Martial's private, poetic world is not as insulated from public/political life as the poem's structure initially suggests.

Verses 21-4 discuss the kind of conversation that is likely (or ought) to accompany dinner. Martial's pronouncement that there will be 'jollity without malice' (*sine felle ioci*), 'freedom that brings no regrets the following morning' (*nec mane timenda/ libertas*), and 'nothing you would wish you had kept to yourself' (*nil quod tacuisse velis*) on one level simply reinforces the festive, light-hearted, even licentious atmosphere that his menu has established. More

clarifying the network's correct distribution figures: e.g., *Aq.* 9, 33-4, 64, 74-7, 89-93, 130.

³⁸ See above, n. **XXX18**.

³⁹ Gowers 1993: 256.

specifically, it references a recurring topos in satire and invective, whereby poets explore the balance between anything-goes, Lucilian-style frankness and a less acerbic self-restraint (which Juvenal – another of Martial’s interactive acquaintances⁴⁰ – particularly eschews). In so doing, it pursues the on-going analogy between Martial’s dinner party and his epigrams to reinforce a claim he makes elsewhere (not altogether seriously, of course) about the (relatively) innocuous nature of his writing. But, following his reference to Frontinus and through him to the poem’s immediate political context (both of which are picked up by the echo in *sine felle* of *sine faece*), this discussion of conversational/literary register may also take on a political dimension – and not a particularly reassuring one.

For, with regime change in mind, the juxtaposition of *timenda* and *libertas* and allusions to silence and self-censorship inject a troubling note. (We might even be tempted to read some correspondence – or interaction – with Tacitus and his *Agricola* in Martial’s phrase *nil quod tacuisse [Tacuisse?] velis*.⁴¹) Verses 21-2 may appear to promise unconstrained speech, but they surround it with a sense of anxiety and caution that not only alert us to the potential for social faux pas but also remind us of the way in which Domitian’s principate was often described. The poem’s final word – *reus* – even threatens to transport us not just to the law courts (where slanderous slurs might be challenged) but back to the world of informers and treason trials from which Rome, thanks to Trajan, is supposed to have escaped. Note Martial’s insistence once more on the passing of time (*mane*): a wine-filled evening, followed by the cold light of day (a less positive progression, perhaps, than the passing of hours we see at the start of the epigram). For Gowers, Martial’s closing injunction to his readers to talk of chariot-racing, lest drunken discourse puts anyone on trial, celebrates the fact that the guests at his dinner ‘are free to discuss the circus, a subject removed from serious political slander.’⁴² But it may also hint that his guests are *only* free to discuss such frivolities – that more serious topics are off the menu, because talking now, in 98, is still a potentially hazardous enterprise.⁴³ Some kinds of conversation (like some kinds of wine) might be the cause of sore heads in the morning.

If that reading is right, 10.48 does not follow its own advice: for, under cover of licentious, poetic frivolity, it takes the liberty of making a serious political point. Far from maintaining a distance between private and public, convivial/poetic and political, it collapses those worlds – and in the process draws attention to overlaps between eras and dynasties too. The epigram’s ring composition (that political frame linking verses 1-4 with 21-24) with thus takes on a potentially sinister thrust, as time threatens to become cyclical rather than progressive – and as the ‘temperate’ eighth hour starts to feel a little less refreshing. For in the light of the continuity that we glimpse not just in the wine and Martial’s poetry but also in the politicised atmosphere that invades the epigram (and the dinner), the change-over of cohorts back in verse 2 acquires an unsettling significance, in so far as it reminds us that transition can involve repetition (remember *redit*: ‘returns’) as well as transformation.

⁴⁰ See especially Kelly’s chapter in this volume.

⁴¹ Especially *Ag.* 2-3.

⁴² Gowers 1993: 263.

⁴³ Balland 2010: 88 reaches a similar conclusion. When he reissued *Epigrams* 10, Martial presumably anticipated some edgy cross-fertilisation between this and *Ep.* 11.1 (where, under Nerva, talk of racing – and Scorpus – is placed in competitive tension with the reading of Martial’s ‘holiday’ book – *liber otiose*).

Frontinus, that prominent Flavian survivor who re-positioned himself so successfully under Nerva and Trajan – and whose *De Aquis*, like *Epigrams* 10, marks dynastic change by publishing updated corrections (of water supply records, rather than poems) that are tangled up with older pre-Nervan material, whose errors continue to muddy the waters⁴⁴ – plays a pivotal role in pointing this out. For the questions which his association with the wine raises about ages, vintages and the relationship between old and new not only introduce a political note into the supposedly sheltered dinner-party (and poem); they help to expose a fallacy inherent in political periodization, and *Epigrams* 10, and indeed the *De Aquis* itself: namely that, despite the efforts that emperors and authors made to advertise change, new eras (and editions) were not always so very different from what had gone before.

Indeed, at a stretch the (seasoned, or still relatively young? naturally dross-free, or artificially strained?) wine that Martial promises to serve may be read as a thought-provoking metaphor not just for Martial's own poetry but also for some of the new-era writing that others were doing around him. It depends in part on where we think the interactions between Martial and Frontinus start and stop. Does 10.48 simply conjure up Frontinus the statesman, and the political history with which he was associated? (Or not even that? Is Frontinus, after all, merely a temporal or social, not a political, co-ordinate in Martial's homely menu?) Or does the epigram also – necessarily, automatically? – gesture towards the *De Aquis*? (Can mention of Frontinus in 98 avoid doing so? Are the statesman and his texts separable? Does the lack of close lexical connections matter? Is the fact that many will have been aware that Frontinus was writing this text, and beginning to circulate it, enough to trigger some kind of interactivity?) And might 10.48, through interplay with the *De Aquis* and the reflections which it prompts on contemporary literary production as well as regime-change, even spark a chain-reaction of further interactions with other contemporary texts (like the *Agricola*) which were themselves busy marking and reflecting upon the start of a supposedly new (literary and political) era?

The picture which Tacitus paints at the start of the *Agricola* of trends in literary activity in changing political contexts gives the impression that authors reacted individually to what was going on around them, but not so much to each other. His authors either follow common patterns or stick their necks out on an individual basis; they do not (as he represents them) sharpen each others' ideas or agenda by corresponding or cross-referencing amongst themselves.⁴⁵ What we have seen here (and in other a number of other chapters) alerts us to a more complex, intense set of interrelationships, with intertextual cross-fertilisations (on and off the page, and across different genres and reading contexts) helping collectively to interrogate and shape authors' and readers' responses to changing times – and, indeed, subsequent readings of each others' texts (a cycle of intertextuality and interdiscursivity nuancing each other).⁴⁶

⁴⁴ See esp. *De Aq.* 64-76, where Frontinus brings together figures from the old (erroneous) imperial records and his own (more accurate) findings in order to underline the differences between them.

⁴⁵ The shortage of obvious references in Tacitus's own works to contemporary authors and texts might tempt us to think that Tacitus himself eschewed such cross-fertilisations; as, e.g., Whitton 2012 underlines, however, his allusive engagement with contemporaries is not to be underestimated.

⁴⁶ Cf. especially Marchesi's chapter, on the way in which new meanings emerge out of the dialogue between parallel/competing redeployments of texts in other near-contemporary works.

10.58

By turns boisterous and melancholic, lewd and philosophical, outward-looking and introspective, the epigrams that immediately follow 10.48 baffle the reader with the variety of their styles and subjects (food and drink, death and age, glory, sex, clientship, city versus country, *negotium* versus *otium*); but they also tantalise us with faint verbal and thematic connections (for example, a shared interest in measuring, as in 10.50, 53, 55 and 57⁴⁷), which invite us to trace patterns and subtexts across and between them, while eluding attempts to pin any firmly down. The ‘safe’ topic of conversation that Martial recommends for his dinner party at the end of 10.48 – the chariot-racer Scorpis – pops up twice, in 10.50 and 10.53; and his shock death not only engages with other poems in *Epigrams* 10 where mortality, achievement (especially poetic) and the value and transience of fame are debated but also reminds us – if reminder were needed – that what might seem light-hearted in Martial one moment can change in an instant and feel suddenly serious. Indeed, the death of Scorpis so soon after he has been recommended as a ‘safe’ topic of conversation might even signal the death – or at least the dearth – of such ‘safe’ topics. That possibility is complicated by the fact that he returns from the dead to speak himself in 10.53 (more time-travel, again collapsing past and present). Epigram 10.59, meanwhile, returns us to the book’s opening poem and revokes the suggestion given there that we pick and choose what we read (10.1: ‘If I seem rather too long a book, with too late a full-stop, read a few poems only – *legito pauca*: I shall then be a little book. Quite often my small pages end with the end of a poem. Make me as short as you want me to be – *fac tibi me quam cupis ipse brevem*.’). Employing the metaphor of dining once more to talk about his poetry, Martial here demands readers with large, wide-ranging appetites, not fussy eaters who merely trifle with titbits (the *ofellae* he promised in 10.48?). In so doing, he further complicates the experience of reading his epigrams. The ground shifts beneath our feet, as an approach that was approved at the start of the book is replaced half way through by a conflicting model. By calling to mind as well as contradicting his introductory poem, 10.59 thus marks a caesura in *Epigrams* 10, which kick-starts the second half of the volume by making us look back over what (and how) we have been reading and by raising more questions than it answers about how to proceed.⁴⁸

The distinction that Martial draws at 10.59.2 between brevity and quality might encourage us to pay particular attention to his longer poems. As it happens, 10.48 is the second longest of the book (reason itself, perhaps, for unpicking it carefully); and the longest, 10.30, introduces a theme (the hassles of life in Rome, set against the pleasures of a country retreat) which is picked up by two other relatively long pieces – 10.51 and 10.58⁴⁹ – the second of which not only sits right next to that though-provoking caesura but also brings us back to Frontinus.

⁴⁷ As Rimell 2009: 66 points out, *Epigrams* 10 particularly ‘chews over the passage of time, celebrating birthdays, and debating what it is to think about and approach mortality at crucial life junctures.’

⁴⁸ In this sense, it mimics the effect of *Epigrams* 10 as a book, which Rimell 2009: 65 describes as ‘a fault line in Martial’s twelve-book epic tome, which teaches us to keep looking backwards and forwards, to (re) read everything differently.’

⁴⁹ At sixteen and fourteen verses long respectively, *Ep.* 10.51 and 10.58 stand out from the poems immediately surrounding them, which are all eight verses long or shorter. On city-versus-country in *Ep.* 10, see esp. Spisak 2002: 132-4; Fearnley 2003: 630-1; Merli 2006a: 259-61.

The first four verses of 10.58 focus on place, transporting us to ‘the calm retreat of coastal Anxur’, where Martial revels (and puts down roots) in a ‘seaside villa, quite close to Baiae, a grove untroubled, even at the height of summer, by inconsiderate crickets, and free-flowing ponds’:

Anxuris aequorei placidos, Frontine, recessus
et propius Baias litoreamque domum,
et quod inhumanae cancro fervente cicadae
non novere nemus, flumineosque lacus
dum colui...

These verses, and especially the epigram’s first two words, closely recall 10.51.7-10, where Martial similarly celebrates Anxur’s ‘watery’ delights, inviting us to read the two poems as a pair.⁵⁰ And because 10.51 compares the charms of Anxur with the topography of Rome, where days are stolen (v. 5-6) and men become weary and resentful (v. 15-6), an implicit (and unfavourable) contrast with Rome is immediately triggered at the start of 10.58 too. Its evocation of temperate tranquillity is reminiscent also of the ‘not stagnant water’ (*nec languet aequor*), ‘the living quiet of the sea’ (*viva sed quies ponti*) and the light breezes (*leni... vento*) of 10.30, another Rome-rejecting poem.⁵¹ But Martial’s lyrical rewriting of a scene he has painted (more than once) before also draws attention to his poetic talents, which is fitting because this version of the city-country contrast concentrates particularly on the constraints, or demands, which life in Rome imposes upon poetic production.⁵²

First Martial sketches his poetic ideal (v. 5-6); and the gently moving waters and absence of harsh heat and noise that introduce it embody both the benign literary freedom that he claims to have enjoyed at Anxur (where he had leisure to cultivate the learned Muses with Frontinus: *doctas tecum celebrare vacabat/ Pieridas*) and the kind of authentic, unadulterated, free-flowing, pleasant-sounding poetry that we are invited to believe he composed as a result. In Rome, by contrast, he finds himself ‘tossed about in the city’s depths’ (*iactamur/ in alto urbis*) and forced to ‘waste’ his life in ‘fruitless toil’ (*et in sterili vita labore perit*).⁵³ These are recognisably poetic images which underline, with deliberate irony, the ignominy of his un-poetic situation⁵⁴ – brought about in part, presumably, by his poetic fame: Martial has made it big, and is now being buffeted by the turbulent tide of his success. Verses 6-7 might be read as a subtle boast, in other words, as much as a complaint:

...nunc nos maxima Roma terit.
hic mihi quando dies meus est?...

Now almighty Rome wears us down. In the city, when do I have a day
that belongs just to me?

⁵⁰ Balland 2010: 63 also notes similarities between them.

⁵¹ On 10.30, see also Mratschek in this volume. Martial’s attitude to both city and country is fluid, of course; for Merli 2006b: 338-40 the city-countryside contrast in Book 10 is even ‘more complex and less stereotypic’ than in other books.

⁵² Merli 2006a: 266; Spisak 2002: 138.

⁵³ Clientship (note the talk in v. 11 of haunting thresholds), or perhaps two-penny poetry? (In pers. comm. Rimell recently pointed out that *damna* [v.12] is used at 13.1.3 to refer almost directly to the book of Xenia itself.)

⁵⁴ On this imagery (and the echoes it contains of Virgil *Aen.* 1.3 and Horace *Ep.* 2.2), see esp. Rimell 2009: 89 and 199.

Crucially, it is not just any old Rome that is complained about here; it is Rome AT THIS MOMENT, as opposed to Anxur IN THE PAST. 10.30 depicts both Rome and Formiae in the present tense: Apollinaris flees, admires, desires; breezes blow, fish are caught, Rome keeps men captive, and bailiffs reap the benefit. 10.51 similarly focuses on ‘now’ (*iam*, v. 1): Rome may have stolen days in the past, but Faustinus is depicted (still) resisting its hazards in the present, and Anxur is as vibrant as ever. In 10.58, by contrast, the poetic retreat of Anxur is consigned to the past (*dum colui... vacabat*) by the present, bruising force of ‘mightiest Rome’ (*nunc nos maxima Roma terit*). Of course, Martial’s *nunc* might be making a merely seasonal point, referring to (say) October/November in no particular year, as opposed to (say) August/September when many people were away from Rome.⁵⁵ But it may also be epoch-marking in some way or another, drawing attention (for instance) to Martial’s growing readership and the new demands which his popularity is making of him.⁵⁶ Michael Peachin wonders whether is it a new phase not in Martial’s but in Frontinus’ career that is being marked: might *nunc* allude to Frontinus’ ‘stressful occupation with the water supply’?⁵⁷ Given the questions which Frontinus’ presence in 10.48 raises about time, age and dynasties, I would go further and see Martial’s emphatic NOW as an invitation to scrutinise the trajectories of both men (at a point in the poem where the emphasis on *nos* gives way to *mihi*), against the backdrop of wider literary and political developments. In a book whose exact timing is a moot point, *nunc* invites us to look all over again at the double caesura of 96/98 which divides the Flavian past from the Trajanic present.

On one level, Frontinus functions simply as a representative patron in 10.58, through whom Martial is able to articulate some of his (timeless) frustrations with the hassles of being a client. He begins the epigram as a literary companion, immersed in Martial’s poetic world, literally surrounded (on the page) by its *placidus recessus* and *doctas Pieridas*. But as the demands of Rome break in, first person plurals become wryly poetic (while *iactamur* in v. 7 might apply to both men, *pascimus* applies to Martial alone), and the rising statesman and epigrammatist begin to go separate ways. Their history – a timeline of the evolution of their relationship – is plotted as we read, with *nunc*, as always in *Epigrams* 10, contextualised by what has come before. The epigram ends with a (defiantly poetic) avowal of Martial’s devotion to Frontinus, that re-unites them but also captures the gulf that has opened up between them. The trajectory that Frontinus takes within these verses inevitably evokes his wider political career, his move from the leisurely margins of public life to the very heart of Roman politics, where – under the auspices of Nerva and Trajan – he was now setting a new blueprint for Rome’s governing class. And that adds an extra dimension to the use that Martial makes of him (as an insider, who is helping Martial to define his outsider-status). For in progressively distancing himself from Frontinus as the poem develops (and as time marches inexorably on, towards the present day), Martial does not simply reject the trials and tribulations of *negotium* per se; he inevitably (deliberately?)

⁵⁵ Thanks to Christopher Whitton for emphasising this; a useful reminder that we/I need not always default to political readings. That said, seasons and (un)seasonality often feature in Martial as invitations to reflect on epochal change, poetic and political (e.g. 13.127, where the unseasonality of roses prompts political reflection; also 12.1 and 12.18, on Martial’s new book/career-chapter/relationship with Rome).

⁵⁶ Cf. 11.3, where Martial is read as far afield as Britain (a counterpoint to 11.1, where no one is reading his volumes).

⁵⁷ Peachin 2004: 159.

contrasts his own endeavours with the specifically Nerva/Trajanic model of *negotium* which Frontinus now (*nunc*), in 98, embodies.⁵⁸

The closing words of the epigram perhaps underscore this. As André Balland has noted, the striking phrase *et non officiosus amo* calls to mind an earlier epigram (1.55), where Martial had previously used the language of *amare* and *officium* (again in the closing pair of verses) to round up another formulation of his avowed preference for the country/*otium* over the city/*negotium*: ‘I pray that whoever has no love for me has no love for this [leisurely/rustic] life; may that kind of man live out his pallid existence in the exercise of civic duties (*urbanis officiis*).’⁵⁹ A life of *officium*, in other words, is the poor alternative to a share in Martial’s interests and affections: the two are incompatible, Martial tells Fronto, a(nother) paragon of military and civic service: *clarum militiae, Fronto, togaeque decus*.⁶⁰ In 10.58, *amor* and *officium* are still in tension, but the distance between them has shrunk. Martial remains *et non officiosus*, which in the first instance refers to his unconventional behaviour as a client (‘I love you, albeit undutifully’), but also evokes his ongoing rejection of civic obligations (as the trajectory of the epigram and its echo of 1.55 nudges us to see: ‘I love you, even though I am a fan of *officium*/officialdom’). He closes 10.58, however, by overwriting the confrontational dismissal (*non amet... non amat...*) that concludes 1.55 with an embrace (*amo*) that builds a last-minute bridge between himself and his patron after the growing differentiation of the previous verses.

Talking of bridges (or aqueducts), we might want to compare what Frontinus himself does with the concepts of *amor* and *officium* in the *De Aquis*. Frontinus brings *diligentia* and *amor* into close cooperation with each other in his preface, when characterising his and Nerva’s approach to Roman administration: like his emperor (‘I couldn’t say if he was more dedicated or more passionate in his attitude to the state’; *nescio diligentiore an amantiore rei publicae imperatore*), Frontinus claims to have been roused not only to industry but also to devotion (*non ad diligentiam modo verum ad amorem*) when Nerva appointed him to the office of *curator aquarum* (*nunc mihi ab Nerva Augusto... aquarum iniunctum officium ad usum*; *Aq.* 1). He is also at pains throughout the treatise (e.g. *Aq.* 2, 77 and 130) to show that he goes above and beyond the call of duty in the exercise of his new *officium*. Frontinus may himself be engaging in some literary – not merely political – interaction in this: his passionate claims to be motivated by *amor* may be a move (conscious or subconscious) to wrest the language of love from the likes of Martial and the world of poetry and to override its now traditional isolation from definitions/representations of *negotium*. Over-interpretation? Perhaps. But who wouldn’t back Martial to seize on such a detail and work it up into a topos? Martial’s collocation of *officiosus* and *amo* may just be a nod towards Frontinus’ rhetorical manoeuvre. If so, it is also – crucially – a further refinement of Frontinus’ attempts to unite the two concepts/worlds. Martial’s happiness to profess ‘devotion’ (*amor*) but reluctance to act *officiose* does not simply align him with the long-standing Catullan/elegiac tradition which underpins (and is evoked by 10.58’s echoes of) 1.55; it brings his career-choices into competitive contrast with the model that the paradigmatic Frontinus is setting.

⁵⁸ Some literary interaction with John Henderson has helped me see that the opposition between Martial and Frontinus is there from v. 1, with *Frontine* (*frons*: at the forefront, on the cusp) placed in tension with the retreating or backing off (*recessus*) that Martial champions/embodies.

⁵⁹ Balland 2010: 108-9.

⁶⁰ Balland is so struck by the parallels between the two poems that he suggests that the Fronto of 1.55 may even be Frontinus (*ibid.* 108-113).

Martial's nostalgia for Anxur's 'riverlike lakes' (the *flumineosque lacus* of v. 4) may also feel faintly suggestive in connection with Frontinus.⁶¹ For, in a climactic section of the *De Aquis* (*Aq.* 87-93: the one bit which anyone scrolling through the text is likely to zoom in on) Frontinus foregrounds Nerva's decision to separate a river and lake, that together had been polluting much of Rome's water supply, as evidence of the transformative effect that Nerva's (and of course Frontinus') *cura* and *diligentia* were having – not just on the aqueducts themselves but on the very health of the whole city.⁶² The allusion is vanishingly subtle (so elusive that some commentators have marvelled at Martial's failure to refer to Frontinus' activities as *curator aquarum* anywhere in this epigram⁶³), but together with the suggestive phrasing in the final verses and the contrast that is drawn between past and present part way through, this striking (re)coupling of *flumen* and *lacus* (as part of a distinctively *previous* paradise) may hint at a certain (jocular?) scepticism about the vision of a Rome revitalised and refreshing – dramatically cleaned up and freer-flowing – that the *De Aquis* itself presents us with. Anxur's long-standing *aequoreusness* (v. 1) stands in mute contrast to Rome's newly *aqua*[duct]-rich state.⁶⁴

10.58 feels personal and pessimistic, at the same time as being playful (let us not underestimate that) and perhaps parodic. Its range of moods and meanings is extended by the fact that Martial engages with Frontinus in more than one guise – as a sometime-poet, patron and prominent statesman. Frontinus' presence does not make a politicised interpretation inevitable; but signposts within the poem do point us towards that if we choose to follow them up. Overlaps with several surrounding epigrams have a similar effect. Given its similarities with 10.51, there has been some debate about whether or not 10.58 was originally addressed to Faustinus – or whether Frontinus should be taken as the recipient of both.⁶⁵ In fact, the difference in addressee helps these epigrams to function more effectively as a pair (and as part of a trilogy with 10.30, which in turn links them to other cycles of epigrams within Book 10), for the change in personnel enables Martial to develop their common themes in

⁶¹ Balland 2010: 113 also notes this possibility.

⁶² *Aq.* 87-93 represent a (welcome) pause, after lists of incorrect and correct distribution figures (which Frontinus himself acknowledges may seem 'not only dry but also confusing', *Aq.* 77) and before the text's closing discussion of the laws and practices relating to the aqueducts' maintenance; here Frontinus brings aqueduct administration into explicit dialogue with contemporary politics, in eye-catching ways. Nerva's decision to move the source of the Anio Novus so that the river can no longer muddy the lake's clear waters is foregrounded as the highlight of his celebrated reforms (which themselves, we are to understand, are emblematic of his wider approach to government); indeed, such is the impact of his separation of river and lake that a new inscription has been set up, celebrating Nerva as the aqueduct's new founder (*Aq.* 93). (On the possibility that Trajan is the emperor named in this inscription, see Rodgers 2004 *ad loc.*)

⁶³ See, e.g., Baldwin 1994: 485: 'if Martial's poem is addressed to our man, he seems to have missed a golden opportunity... for neatly pointed flattery by not contrasting the waters near which Frontinus takes his leisure with those to which he devotes his working days.' Cf. White 1975: 295-6, n. 41.

⁶⁴ A connoisseur might detect John Henderson's input here too.

⁶⁵ On the question of 10.58's addressee, see esp. White 1975: 295-6, n. 41; Baldwin 1994: 485; Nauta 2002: 55, n. 51; Peachin 2004: 158-9; Balland 2010: 108-114 (the consensus favours Frontinus). On the possibility (generally discounted) that 10.51 may have been addressed to Frontinus, see Damon 1997: 162, n. 37; Peachin 2004: 158, n. 8.

thought-provoking ways.⁶⁶ In the wake of his appearance in 10.48 and the role that he may play in 10.58, turning a comparison between past and present into an (other) opportunity to reflect on differences between political eras, Frontinus contrasts more sharply than he might otherwise have done with Faustinus (who contrasts also with Apollinaris in 10.30⁶⁷). For while Faustinus belongs firmly to Martial's literary circle and seems thoroughly committed to a life of cultured leisure,⁶⁸ Frontinus figures more as an outsider (in 10.48 he is not one of the epigram's invited poet-guests, but an intrusion from public life into a private party) and as an emerging member of Rome's new governing elite (in 10.58). In conjunction/comparison with both Faustinus and Apollinaris, in other words, Frontinus adds an extra piquancy to a series of epigrams that set out Martial's (growing?) disenchantment with (?especially Nerva/Trajanic) Rome (Frontinus being a more striking Nerva/Trajanic paradigm than Apollinaris was⁶⁹).

As with 10.48, the most controversial aspect of what I am suggesting here is that, as well as engaging with Frontinus the man (in all of his dimensions), 10.58 is also engaging with and responding to some of Frontinus' writing – to the textual Frontinus who survives to this day. (Would it be at all controversial if the text involved were not a 'technical' treatise? Should it be controversial for that reasons?⁷⁰). It may even prompt reflection on the literary phenomenon that Frontinus' *De Aquis* represents.⁷¹ For this treatise does not just celebrate Nerva's administrative reforms (and the new scope that they might give to ambitious senators); it also asserts a harmonious and mutually beneficial relationship between writing and public/political life (one that goes beyond the easing of tensions between authors and emperors and the tentative literary revival that we see explored, for instance, in Tacitus' *Agricola*).⁷² *De Aquis* unites Roman (particularly Livian) historiography, imperial record-keeping, Ciceronian oratory and administrative pamphleteering in one text, in a way which forges constructive connections between literary and civic/political

⁶⁶ Balland 2010: 63 sees 10.58 as 'dans une large mesure une *retractatio* de X.51.'

⁶⁷ As Mratschek discusses in this volume, the focus of 10.30 – Domitius Apollinaris – was consul in 97, and (like Frontinus) a useful co-ordinate for both Martial and Pliny in their respective self-portraits (and particularly their interactive reflections on *otium/negotium*).

⁶⁸ As Nauta 2002: 67 points out, Faustinus (the recipient of nineteen epigrams) 'is never praised for any kind of oratorical, political, or military activity; what does receive attention is his literary production and his life of cultured leisure at his villas'. On Faustinus' role in Martial's epigrams, see also Balland 2010: 39-91, esp. 55-65.

⁶⁹ As Mratschek notes above (XXX2), Apollinaris' career seems to have fizzled out with his Nerva (suffect) consulship).

⁷⁰ Ancient 'technical' and scientific writing has been re-evaluated from lots of different angles over the last couple of decades (e.g., Nicolet 1995; Meissner 1999; Formisano 2001; Asper 2007; König & Whitmarsh 2007; Taub & Doody 2009; Fögen 2009; Doody, Fölinger & Taub 2012; Formisano & van der Eijk 2017; König & Woolf 2017) and we now have a much better understanding of the internal complexities of some of these texts and their embeddedness in the literary, social and political cultures of their time.

⁷¹ Cf. Geue's comments in this volume (XXX10-11) on 'generic turf wars' and literary interactivity.

⁷² See esp. *Aq.* 1-3, where Frontinus' writing is represented as (among other things) a service to the state, because of the role that it plays in teaching Frontinus was he needs to know as *curator aquarum*; also his claim (ibid.) that his other texts have been written for other people's instruction.

activity. Martial, by contrast, in plotting his (and Frontinus') journey from the learned, leisured Muses to the prosaic maelstrom of civic duty as a narrative of literary degeneration, challenges that (just as his – suspiciously? – lees-less wine in 10.48 perhaps raises questions about the artificially cleansed atmosphere of Frontinus' *De Aquis*). *Epigram* 10.58 is not just another variation on the 'Rome-makes-(good)-writing-difficult' theme, in other words, but a fascinating counterpoint to Frontinus' *De Aquis* (and other texts written around the same time), which invites reflection on the diversity of contemporary literary (and not-so-literary) activity, and on the variety of stories that could be told about the relationship between literary production and the civic and political world. Like 10.48, its engagement with Frontinus (as both statesman and author) also shines a spotlight on the intricate dynamics and different levels of literary interactivity, and the role played by such interactions (not just individual textual interventions) in the digestion and evolution of contemporary discourse.

Beyond *Epigrams* 10

Martial's interaction with Frontinus does not necessarily stop there: two later epigrams (12.8 and 12.50) contain suggestive nuggets. Indeed, *Epigram* 12.8 opens with a pair of verses that closely recall *Aq.* 88.1, where Frontinus rejoices that Rome, 'the queen and mistress of the world, who is goddess of the lands (*quae terrarum dea consistit*), and to whom there is no equal and no second (*cui par nihil et nihil secundum*), senses the care of her most devoted emperor and prince Nerva each day.'

Terrarum dea gentiumque Roma,
cui par est nihil et nihil secundum,
Traiani modo laeta cum futuros
tot per saecula computaret annos,
et fortem iuvenemque Martiumque
in tanto duce militem videret,
dixit praeside gloriosa tali:
'Parthorumque proceres ducesque Serum,
Thraces, Sauromatae, Getae, Britanni,
possum ostendere Caesarem; venite.'

When Rome, goddess of the globe and its peoples – who has no equal, and no inferior that comes close – was joyfully counting out Trajan's future years and could see in such a great leader a brave, youthful and Mars-like soldier, she said (revelling in this splendid ruler): 'Nobles of Parthia, leaders of the Seres, Thracians, Sarmatians, Getans, Britons, I can show you a Caesar: come!'

Most commentators assume that, rather than this being a case of Martial borrowing from Frontinus (or vice versa), the phrases in question were interpolated into the *De Aquis* from Martial by a later editor (the favourite candidate being the mediaeval copyist Peter the Deacon).⁷³ That theory is prompted by the difficulty readers tend to have in accepting that the author of a practical, administrative work might have shown some occasional poetic flair (as the scholar Justus Lipsius put it in 1598, 'the sober and learned pen of Frontinus does not approve of or like the playfulness of

⁷³ E.g. Rodgers 2004 *ad loc.*; Dederich 1839: 108-9.

poets⁷⁴), and also by an assumption that Martial and his consumers were unlikely to be closely acquainted with a text like the *De Aquis*. My readings of 10.48 and 10.58 have argued otherwise, and invite us to test out the possibility that we have here another instance either of Frontinus echoing Martial or (more likely, given the publication dates⁷⁵) of Martial reusing a phrase from Frontinus, in the expectation, presumably, that his readers would recognise it.

Connection with Frontinus' *De Aquis* potentially loads 12.8 with new layers of meaning. Standing alone, it looks ahead (optimistically: *laeta*; proudly: *gloriosa* – or crowingly, even?) near the start of Trajan's reign to what his principate may bring. In characterising him primarily as a soldier-emperor (v. 5-6), its boast to the chieftains of Parthia, Serica, and other far-flung places particularly conjures up the prospect of great military campaigns and conquests. Association with *De Aquis* 88.1, however, deploys other aspects of the regime's propaganda by pointing us back to some of its founding rhetoric (Nerva's diligent and patriotic concern for civic reform, which was often contrasted with Flavian mismanagement and corruption⁷⁶). In their allusion to the *De Aquis* (if allusion it is), the epigram's opening verses thus extend the scope of our look at Trajan, not just by setting one (military) picture of him alongside a different (civic) feature of his imperial persona, but also by turning our thoughts to the origins of his principate, as well as its potential destination. 12.8's echo of (or borrowing from?) Frontinus may even prompt reflection on the very evolution of imperial imagery – and the role that texts (and interactions) themselves play in it. By transporting us from one laudatory text to another and back again, 12.8.1-2 draws attention to the power that literature and literary dialogue has, to shape (and complicate) a reader's view of the emperor.

Epigram 12.50 potentially complicates our picture of Trajan – or at least Trajanic times – further. Across Martial's corpus, poems apparently in praise of the emperor are accompanied by others that seem to muddy the waters.⁷⁷ 11.7, for instance, contrasts the days of Domitian (when the emperor's depravities could provide a handy cover for a wanton woman) with Nerva's reign ('under the emperor Nerva, you may be a Penelope', 4-5).⁷⁸ But, in pointing out that its addressee does not want to reform – Paula is still lustfully promiscuous, despite the demise of her Domitianic excuse – it draws attention to a continuity of vice that cuts against the moral change that Nerva's accession is supposed to herald.⁷⁹ *Epigram* 12.50 is not obviously in the same category. It makes no mention of the emperor himself, or of the times in which it is set; rather, it satirises a private villa for its impractical extravagance. But in describing the sound, everywhere, of streams of water going to waste (*et pereuntis aquae fluctus ubique sonat*, 12.50.6) it uses a phrase that resembles one in that section of the *De Aquis* where Frontinus celebrates the transformative impact of Nerva's 'diligent' reforms – in this instance, the fact that not even waste waters go to waste: *ne pereunt quidem aquae otiosae sunt* (*Aq.* 88.3).

⁷⁴ Lipsius 1598: 1.2.

⁷⁵ Kappelmacher 1916: 183-5; Grimal 1944: 89; González Rolán 1985: ix-x and 59-60; Nauta 2002: 55, n. 51; Peachin 2004: 156-7.

⁷⁶ Cf. Pliny *Pan.* 62.2 on the senatorial committee that Nerva had set up to look into (or at least parade the need for) financial economies (Syme 1930).

⁷⁷ A point often made: e.g., Garthwaite 1990, 1993 and 2009: 422-6; Boyle 1995: 265-6; Fearnley 2003: 620-1; Delignon 2008: 459-62 and n. 43; Wolff 2009. Cf. Lorenz 2002 for a sceptical response.

⁷⁸ On 11.7, see Fitzgerald in this volume (XXX11-14).

⁷⁹ Ruth Morello's chapter below (focusing on 11.5, in conjunction with Pliny 8.6) offers a particularly rich analysis of the ways in which *Epigrams* 11 gets us looking afresh at political eras and the difference between past and present.

Striking though that phrase is, it may be a coincidence.⁸⁰ Even so, in recalling (however deliberately/accidentally) that particular chapter of the *De Aquis*, it evokes not just Frontinus' praise of Nerva but also *Epigram* 12.8, where our view of Trajan is expanded by it. In so doing, in investing Martial's description of a rich man's property with a faint political twist, it invites comparison between Nervan/Trajanic rhetoric and the reality behind it. Indeed, like *Epigram* 11.7, it may prompt readers to reflect on the fact that, despite the new regime's thrifty providence (and despite Frontinus' *De Aquis*), private (Domitianic-style?) profligacy still persists.⁸¹ Indeed, it may draw wry attention to the fact that Frontinus' *De Aquis* has not been being read widely or carefully enough – a tongue-in-cheek recommendation to his readers, perhaps, to acquaint themselves better with (the whole of) that work (not least its final chapter, *Aq.* 130, where Frontinus promises imperial retribution to those who flout the regulations).

Martial's engagement with Frontinus in 10.48 and 10.58 potentially enriches other epigrams beyond the scope of his tenth book, then, helping him to trigger various political as well as social reflections, and to sharpen his self-positioning along the way. It must also have impacted on (and not just engaged with) Frontinus' self-positioning: by cementing (not just exploiting) his reputation as a model Nervan/Trajanic statesman; but also by nuancing readers' responses to the statesman and some of his writing, by contextualising and interrogating some of the claims that the *De Aquis* makes. Indeed, it may – in loose dialogue with Tacitus' *Agricola* – perform on Frontinus what Ilaria Marchesi calls an 'overdetermination of [the author] as a cultural object', with new ideas about what 'Frontinus' and his writings signify arising out of these interlocking engagements with him.⁸² In the process, it underscores the embeddedness of literary (inter)activity within a wider web of personal, social, intellectual and political interactions. And it reminds us that Martial's literary interactions and interests ranged well beyond the world of verse, crossing genre boundaries – and that he expected his readers to do likewise. It also raises questions about the profile and status of Frontinus' *De Aquis* and texts like it. Just how widely read was it? And how marginal or pivotal a reference-point did it (not just its author) become for other authors attempting to make sense of the times? Where in the literary scheme of things was it thought to sit? In what literary light did Frontinus, Martial and their contemporaries regard it (where does administrative writing stop and 'literature' start?), and did literary interactions play a part in the determining the (inevitably fluctuating) answer to that question?⁸³

The indirect nature of Martial's interactions with the *De Aquis* – the absence of explicit textual allusions and his engagement with Frontinus as an acquaintance/statesman first and foremost – raises other questions. What intertextual habits did Martial anticipate/play to in his (various circles of) readers? Do his verses point us beyond the consul/patron to his (now celebrated) aqueduct treatise, or does the temptation to go there only arise in certain kinds of (particularly modern?)

⁸⁰ The other obvious intertext for Martial here is *Ov. Am.* 2.15.24. I hesitate to suggest that Frontinus had this in mind when penning *Aq.* 88.3...

⁸¹ Cf. Delignon 2008: 458, who is adamant that Martial does not invite readers to see public/political subtexts in epigrams about private vice.

⁸² See Marchesi on Lucan 'between Martial and Pliny' in this volume, [XXX3](#).

⁸³ As Chris Whitton has pointed out to me (pers. comm.), Pliny – like Martial – makes little if any reference to Frontinus (or indeed Quintilian) *as an author*, which contrasts with his approach to Tacitus; so did genre (historiography versus 'technical' writing) matter after all?

readers? Have I over-determined ‘Frontinus’ as a literary co-ordinate?⁸⁴ And (especially given that uncertainty) how instructive/distorting is it to insist on reading *Epigrams* 10 with the *De Aquis* in mind? In particular, might excessive reference to Frontinus’ treatise lead to political over-interpretation? Those questions are unanswerable, but worth asking nonetheless. Indeed, that is the point of this chapter: it squeezes out the connections and possible cross-fertilisations between Martial and Frontinus, personal and textual, in order to probe some of the dynamics of literary interaction during Nerva’s brief principate and the dilemmas that we face in analysing them as temporally and culturally removed readers.

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⁸⁴ Geue (below, XXX2, with reference to Marchesi and Whitton) sounds an important note of caution: ‘the hint of an ‘actual relationship’ can act as unfairly stout hermeneutic scaffolding to prop up flimsy intertextual latticework.’

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