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I will survive (you): Martial (*Ep.10*) and Tacitus (*Agricola*) on regime change

res olim dissociabiles miscuerit...
Agricola 3.1

I

One of the (perhaps surprising, or not altogether foreseen) revelations of this volume, I predict, shall be that a minor poet – or writer of ‘minor’ poetry - who debuted in 80CE under Titus and was on his way out in 98, should loom large in so many of our chapters on Nervan, Trajanic and Hadrianic literary networking. Discussion of Martial and his take on the heady, mixed up years of 96-98 peppers this book from start to finish, reminding us not only that the epigrammatist, as he hastens in his reissued tenth *libellus* to advertise links with rising Trajanic stars Pliny and Frontinus, is the *elder* of these statesmen, but also that when it comes to modishly reinventing the tropes of memory and forgetting, monumentalisation and iconoclasm in response to the double regime change of 96-98, Martial trumps all his fellow jostlers for fame in experience and proven success.¹ In many ways his ubiquity in such a project should not surprise us. When it comes to variegation, to the performance and observation of interactivity, to the poetics of deniability, to recontextualisation and moving with the times, Martial - *pace* Pliny - sets the bar. By the time Trajan becomes emperor, Martial has been selling his fans cultural authority as portability, survivability and social blending for decades. Yet his ongoing presence seems testament not only to his ingenious pre-modelling of post-96 social interplay as enacted and engineered through literary texts, but also therefore to a sense of urgency in defining the new age, and in self-defining, *against* Flavian (or more to the point, Domitianic), epigrammatic strategies. As Pliny shows in his much analysed epistle 3.21, the trick is to cut down or partially delete Martial while saving what can be recycled of his idiom of reciprocity and wryly self-deprecating (self-protecting) mechanisms of memorialization.² As soon-to-be-retired, Domitianic hanger-on bound to infect all newcomers with his ebullient interactivity (those *lusus* are catchy: 6.85.9), Martial becomes the poetic icon ‘moderate’ Pliny and Tacitus, first and foremost, must go beyond – just as the editors of this volume are motivated to frame as outdated the previous generation’s intellectual mono-focus on Augustan-Neronian texts and on concomitant ‘models’ of intertextuality.³

¹ Martial features in the essays by Ash, Fitzgerald, Geue, König, Marchesi, Morello, Mratschek and Roller.

² See Henderson (2001), Marchesi (2013).

³ **Eds: Cross ref to intro and Whitton in this vol?** Good idea; we can slip in these cross-refs in due course.

In other words, the epigrammatist's consistency from one 'new era' to the next⁴ is arguably an unspoken *problem*, not just for Martial himself as he apparently produces a new edition of *Epigrams* 10 in response to the *damnatio* of Domitian in 97-98, but also for the vanguard wanting to associate themselves with Nerva's, and then Trajan's, 'clean slate'. Martial, however, offers a ready-made template (with inbuilt critique) for future attempts to erase or rewrite him, teaching us - alongside Freudian psychoanalysis and modern memory theory - that forgetting and remembering are never simply opposites.⁵ Thus Pliny's barbed and self-promoting obituary of Martial (*Epist.*3.21) must mime his predecessor's own trademarked *damnatio memoriae*, as inflicted on his latest collection of monumental inscriptions (*Epigrams* 10, first edition).⁶ As Pliny slices epigram 10.21 in two and discards the first half, he is also no doubt well aware that Martial's empowered readers must now be experts in scanning a pared-down page for what is or *might be* missing - silent sarcasm or subversion, less than obvious puns lurking in final lines, jokes drummed but never spelled out in the disconnect between jolly metre and sober content...⁷ 'Forgetting' Martial, in short, inevitably conjures up the poet's own sleight of hand, as well as his cheerful embrace of the indifferent and disrespectful reader (*iam dudum quasi neglegenter audis*, 6.42.23): Juvenal's willful forgetting will in turn pay covert homage to this barely-there satire, as Tom Geue will show in the penultimate chapter of this volume.

It is with all this in mind that I turn to Martial *Epigrams* 10, and to its unlikely, erasable partnership with a text published in the same year, Tacitus' *Agricola*. Tacitus apparently wrote the preface to the *Agricola* between October 97 and January 98, in the months after Domitian's death and Nerva's ascent to power; he was completing the whole text after Trajan became emperor in 98. Martial, meanwhile, initially published the tenth volume of his *Epigrams* in 95, followed swiftly by Book 11 in 96; Book 10 was then withdrawn and rewritten (some poems 'polished up' but most 'new', 10.2.3-4) after Domitian's assassination on September 18, 96, and the second, new-era-friendly version published in 98. While Martial is rebooting his career, Tacitus is publishing what

⁴ See especially Lorenz (2002, 219-31), who emphasizes the continued implicit presence of Domitian in Book 10, and speaks of 'unverkennbare Kontinuität' rather than change between Books 1-9 and Book 10 (210).

⁵ See e.g. Caruth (1995) on trauma, and Billig (1999) on Freudian repression and remembering to forget. Cf. Sailor (2008, 111) on *Agricola*.

⁶ See Henderson (2004) 68-70, and Hardie (2012, 329) on Martial *Ep.*10.3 ('The skulking poet may be Martial himself'), cf. Rimell (2008) 71-6.

⁷ Cf. Elsner (2003), with Hendrick Jr. (2000, xi-xii, 100, 109-10), on the extent to which *damnatio memoriae* is predicated on remembering as well as forgetting what is erased, and Flower (2006, 234-262) on ways sanctions against Domitian might have reflected 'long term difficulties in dealing with the memory of previous disgraced emperors' (237). Cf. Derrida's concepts of 'trace' and (after Heidegger) of 'rature' or erasure (e.g. Derrida 1976 and 1978, esp. 1976 xv-xviii).

looks to be his first book belatedly, after many possible virtual editions.⁸ Yet both face the same Catch-22: how to reinvent themselves anew without cancelling out, or overly implicating themselves in ‘The Domitian Years’, when all the time *they were there*, climbing ladders and avoiding trouble? How to gloss over the problematic aspects of (their role in) the past, while also memorializing the life of a man who lived through it (a father-in-law, or in the case of Martial, the author himself)? Both these synchronal, regime-change *libelli* are concerned with the awkwardness of *silentium* and of self-censorship under Domitian and in the wake of his assassination, and with the fundamental question of the extent to which an author can exert control over (ungovernable) *fama*, or over representation:⁹ they deal in strikingly similar (complementary or competing) ways with how we might think about the past, alongside these writers’ re-launched identities, from the new vantage point of the post-Domitianic present, yet their surface incompatibilities are such that have yet to be read in detail side by side. This essay is an open-ended and all too brief experiment in seeing what might emerge – and how we might perceive both authors/works differently in the social-literary climate of 98 – when we analyse the texts in juxtaposition, or even envisage them as (mutely) interacting.¹⁰

II

It is clear why it would seem on the face of it counterintuitive, even perverse, to twin *Ep.10* and *Agricola* in this way. What would serious, politically engaged, monumental history commemorating the life of one aristocrat-general with an eye on the past and the future, have to say to a miscellaneous collection of flippant, satirical poems cataloguing random and often seedy episodes in Rome’s ephemeral present, or indeed, vice versa? On the face of it Tacitus has the more to lose from any such synergy, particularly if we concur with Dylan Sailor’s and Philip Hardie’s readings of the *Agricola* as ‘correcting’ the crime of Domitian’s ‘perversion of representation’ according to which great men like Agricola were treated with envy, intolerance and suspicion rather than granted the honour they deserved (such ‘correction’ is predicated on a canny delimitation and resolution of the complex textual struggles traced by Tim Whitmarsh and epitomized, crucially, by Martial’s jostling epigram book, where vulnerability to the vagaries of *fama* is overtly thematized).¹¹ Might then the (prose-heavy) intermeshing of literary genres and registers in our period extend this far?

⁸ The critical consensus puts *Agricola* first, but see Murgia (1980) and Beck (1998) on the possibility that the *Dialogus* and *Germania*, respectively, were written slightly before the *Agricola*. In any case, as Sailor puts it (2004, 161) ‘the *Agricola* presents itself as the first step down a particular path’.

⁹ Cf. Hardie (2012, 273-84, 321-29) dealing separately with Tacitus and Martial on *fama*; Sailor (2008) 51-117.

¹⁰ Cf. Marchesi (2013) on Pliny’s selective silencing of Martial in the letters, with Geue in this volume on Juvenal and Pliny. The essays by Fitzgerald, König and Mratschek also discuss the transition from Nerva to Trajan in 97.

¹¹ Sailor (2008, 51-117), Hardie (2012, 273-84), Whitmarsh (2006).

Would Taciturn Statesman Tacitus – whose name advertises grim subtlety – want to associate himself with scurrilous comedian Martial, particularly as he makes his ‘spectacular’ long-awaited debut¹² (politically tainted Martial, meanwhile, struggles to reach his final *meta* in the second edition of Book 10, which strictly speaking is the twelfth book, a fitting ‘end’ to the camp epic edifice of *Epigrams*)? In short, will the pressure to make these texts converse throw up no more than clunky, handbook-style oppositions?¹³ It sometimes looks as though Martial, at least, went out of his way to avoid Tacitus: the friendship between Tacitus and Pliny the Younger is well attested, as is the edgy rapport between Pliny and Martial.¹⁴ But why are there no epigrams mentioning the equally distinguished Tacitus (forty years old in 98, an experienced orator who had been made suffect consul in the previous year), especially if, as some have conjectured, he was almost a fellow Spaniard?¹⁵ Given the opacity, guardedness and silencing strategies of both works as they announce a new freedom to speak openly, is an apparent absence of interaction in itself significant?

Working from apparent silence prompts us to reset our critical approaches (as Tom Geue’s chapter also underlines). If we move cautiously from the general to the specific, we might start by noticing that the two authors have more than a little in common. Tacitus layers satire into his coruscating histories, and like Martial has a marked taste for violent metaphor, concision and *inconcinnitas* – the incongruous or weird. His turn of phrase, much in evidence already in the *Agricola*, often lends itself to citation as a series of (epigrammatic) sound-bites – what do we remember of the *Agricola* (a text all about *how* we remember, as well as about how the right kind of remembering is contingent on a select forgetting) if not the bitter opening slogan *sicut vetus aetas vidit quid ultimum in libertate esset, ita nos quid in servitute* (*Agr.*2.3), and Calgacus’ magnificent definition of imperialist hypocrisy (*auferre trucidare rapere falsis nominibus imperium, atque ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant, Agr.*30.5)?¹⁶ Both, as far as we can tell, are monogeneric writers: Tacitus dedicates his entire writing career to historical prose, echoing his older colleague Martial’s total dedication to the genre of epigram. Other writers working in the same elite community, like Statius (who died in 96, but was perhaps no more than six to ten years Tacitus’ elder¹⁷), Silius Italicus (who we know wrote philosophical dialogues and speeches as well as the

¹² Woodman and Kraus (2014) 35: ‘Few historians can have made such a spectacular debut’.

¹³ **Eds: Cross ref to Fitzgerald?**

¹⁴ See e.g. Henderson (2001), Rutledge (2009), Whitton (2010) and (2012), Marchesi (2013).

¹⁵ The possibly Spanish origin of the Fabius Iustus to whom Tacitus dedicates the *Dialogus* has suggested to some a family connection to Hispania. He was likely from Gallia Narbonensis, which had a border with northern Hispania, although some scholars have suggested Trier in Gallia Belgica as an alternative. See Birley (2000).

¹⁶ It is commonplace to note the ‘epigrammatic’ aspects of Tacitus’ language, yet earlier historians, rather than epigrammatists like Martial, are usually mentioned as models (e.g. Sailor 2012, 37).

¹⁷ Cf. Juvenal 7.82ff.

*Punica*¹⁸), and Pliny (Tacitus' coeval, friend and ally, and Martial's patron) were much more conventionally wide-ranging in their literary output: Pliny produced the *Panegyricus* and ten books of letters, a Greek tragedy, plus elegiac poems, an epic (*Epist.*7.4.2-3), and poetry in the manner of Catullus. Nevertheless, the *Agricola* also shares epigram's core feature of, as Sailor puts it, wearing 'its variety on its face'. Critics invariably comment on 'the multiplicity of generic claims that can be made for the book', and the *Agricola* has been read as an attempt to synthesize the assorted 'voices' and modes of representation suppressed under Domitian.¹⁹ Yet despite the work's 'uniqueness', the extent to which this description also fits the polyphonic epigram book, and Martial's Book 10 in particular, is striking.

Arguably, Tacitus and Martial end up, each in their chosen genre, undertaking what might be construed as analogous projects. Well before Tacitus published his *Annals*, Martial styled himself as annalistic 'one book a year' historian of the random, the everyday, the absurd: in 10.70, he complains he's so busy, hardly one of his books comes out in a single year (*quod mihi vix unus toto liber exeat anno*, 10.70.1), which is turned round into an achievement (Martial did, roughly, publish one book a year between c.86-c.101), and gives another nod to the extra work and delay involved in editing and reissuing volume number ten, *lima rasa recenti* (he would have been the perfect annalistic epigrammatist, if politics had not intervened...)²⁰ While Martial's *libellus* (10.1.2) writes the life of everyman (*hoc lege, quod possit dicere vita "meum est"*, 10.4.8), as well as the final chapter of his own Odyssean autobiography, Tacitus' *liber* (*Agr.*3.3) dedicates itself to a single *vita* of a man who died in 93, who comes to exemplify the public figures whose careers can and should now be celebrated in an age which promises to revive a love of virtue (proving 'that even under evil emperors there can be great men' / *posse etiam sub malis principibus magnos viros esse*, *Agr.*42.4). At the same time, as many have recognized, the account of *Agricola*'s career allows Tacitus to promote a subtle, silent defence of his own trajectory under Domitian: the palimpsestic nature of *Agricola* is hinted at already in this chapter's nostalgia for times when self-respecting men could write their *own* lives (*ipsi vitam narrare*, 1.3).

Both works begin by claiming their authors' noble 'survival' and 'rebirth' after an era that seemed bent on killing them off, and forced them to experience a 'living death': Tacitus' (Rome's) 'body' has escaped physical torture but still needs time to heal after resuscitation, while Martial imagines a post-Augustan 'afterlife' and re-embodiment through his readers, rewriting his own epitaph in the virtual monument of 10.2 while simultaneously returning his faithful public to the

¹⁸ Silius was well known to Pliny, Tacitus and Martial, as evidenced for example at Martial 7.63, 6.64, 4.14, Tacitus *Hist.*3.65, Pliny *Epist.*3.7.

¹⁹ Sailor (2008) 116.

²⁰ 10.2.3: *nota leges quaedam sed lima rasa recenti*.

ironic tombstone publicizing his ‘always already posthumous fame’ in 1.1.²¹ In terms of structure, each work shows off exemplary ring-composition. As commentators observe, the *Agricola* is framed by a three-chapter preface and conclusion which echo one another in message and vocabulary, while the middle sections on Britain (10-17, 29-38), almost identical in length and working over the same themes, sandwich the centerpiece cataloguing events in Britain in the years 77-83.²² Meanwhile Martial’s book develops an especially elaborate frame which itself promotes the larger plot of circularity and return (to the now revised *editio prima*, to *Epigrams* Book 1, to poetic beginnings, to the poet’s Spanish origins, to Augustan monumentality, and to an idealized past suggestively captured by *alta Bilbilis*). In a chiasmic pattern, 10.1 and 10.2 deal with the *libellus* and the *lector* respectively, while 10.103 and 10.104 address Spanish audiences and finally the book itself as it boards the ship to Spain, a finale-rebeginning to match 10.2’s dense concentrate of allusions to Augustan poetic endings (more on this below).²³ In each case the book performs and trains readers in remembering (the text they have just read), so that the political courage of not-forgetting becomes inseparable from honouring the literary lives of Tacitus/*Agricola* and Martial themselves, as they assert their power to memorialize, or to avoid oblivion (‘we would have lost our memory as well as our voice, had it been as much in our power to forget as it was to remain silent.’ / *memoriam quoque ipsam cum voce perdissemus, si tam in nostra potestate esset oblivisci quam tacere. Agr.2.3, cf. Martial 10.2.7-8*)

III

Whether Tacitus and Martial interacted in the period in which they were writing *Agricola* and *Ep.10* side by side, we cannot know for sure. But the symbiotic nature of their subject matter is itself fascinating, and Tacitus’ self-serving claim at *Agr.3.1* that the Domitian years saw the extinguishing of *ingenia studiaque* (which we might translate more vaguely as ‘men’s spirits and enthusiasm’, or more specifically as ‘literary talents and devotion to study’) seems to actively bait the robust reaction of an ingenious career poet like Martial. Both works are of similar length and both straddle eras – Martial’s book because it is, so self-consciously and thematically, a second edition, and Tacitus’ *Agricola* because it deals with a life and events in Britain that belong to the Domitianic past, from the perspective of the Trajanic present. Both are dyadic texts that thematise doubling and take as their structural underpinning the then and the now, the then versus the now, the then in the

²¹ The first edition *elapsus manibus*, at 10.2.2, where *manibus* (‘from my hands’) also puns on the ablative of *manes*, ‘shades of the dead’: the volume is reborn. On *Ep.1.1* as an epitaph to the poet himself, see Citroni (1975) 14-15, Howell (1980) 102-3.

²² Cf. Woodman and Kraus (2014, 2-3), and Whitmarsh (2006, 305): ‘The architecture of the text is eloquent’. Also see Sailor (2008), 84, 106-8.

²³ Sullivan (1991, 48, 50) refers to the ‘superiority’ of Book 10 and defines it as ‘carefully crafted’. On 10.103 and 104. see Bongiovanni (2012) *ad loc.*

now. Indeed Tacitus seems to evoke – and perhaps also harness - the bustling variety of Martial’s book, with its energizing strategies of juxtaposition (or *putting two together*), when he writes that Nerva has already ‘mixed up things that were once incompatible: the principate and liberty’ (*res olim dissociabiles miscuerit, principatum ac libertatem*, 3.1), a image redeployed by Pliny in his *Panegyricus* (*iunxisti enim ac miscuisti res diversissimas, securitatem olim imperantis et incipientis pudorem*. / ‘you have joined and blended very different things, the security of a governor and the modesty of a beginner’, 42.1). Tacitus’ motto seems to capture a (Martial’s) connection between epigrammatic poetics and the social and political worlds epigram represents and remakes. We might be tempted to infer that epigram’s poetics of miscellany is destined to come of age under Trajan, especially if we extend the rhetorical, philosophical and political models of diachronic contrast and synchronic synthesis proposed and performed by the *Agricola* itself to include interrelationships between this and other texts written at the same time.²⁵

While *Epigrams* 10 reaches out towards Spain, the *Agricola* encompasses Britain (as Tacitus writes in *Agr.*11, the two countries were imagined to lie opposite each other, and the Silures, especially, look Spanish²⁶). Likewise, in both texts we inhabit an empire that has recently brought all within its grasp and whose outer margins are *known* (not least by these writers), an empire in which, as Martial puts it at 10.13.10, ‘any place can be Rome for the two of us’ (*in quocumque loco Roma duobus erit*).²⁷ The question to what extent both Bilbilis and Britain not just ‘belong’ to Rome but also represent a Rome lost in the idealized past is provoked by both texts, split as they are not just between geographies and ethnic/cultural identities, but also between times.²⁸ While Tacitus’ Britain has ‘not yet’ (*nondum*, 11.5) been ‘softened’ by luxury, and is portrayed as the last bastion of rugged manliness (or primitive *ferocia*, depending on where and how we look), Martial’s return to Spain in Book 10 will allow him to turn away from effeminate *urbanitas* and to rediscover a macho, anti-elegiac aesthetic, in apparent defence against *otium*’s connotations of political impotence and compliance (Tacitus will mount a parallel defence of Agricola’s *tranquillitas* and *otium* on his return to Rome, in *Agr.*40.4-42.3). In 10.65, for example, the poet aggressively dismisses a depilated, lisping Greek who persists in calling him ‘brother’, asserting his own impenetrability and physical difference (‘you go around all spruced up with your hair in curls, mine is stubborn and Spanish’, / *tu flexa nitidus coma vagaris / Hispanis ego contumax capillis*, 10.65, 7-

²⁵ On miscellany and poetic-as-social interaction in the *Epigrams*, see Fitzgerald (2007) and Rimell (2008), *passim*, cf. Whitton (2010, 120) on the ‘inextricability of literature and governance in the Trajanic senatorial elite’.

²⁶ *Agr.*11: *Silurum colorati vultus, torti plerumque crines et posita contra Hispania Hiberos veteres traiecisse easque sedes occupasse fidem faciunt*.

²⁷ See Clarke (2001) and Sailor (2008, 89-92) on why Britain as it comes to be not just conquered but known is the ideal location for the *res gestae* of Agricola and the ambitions of *Agricola*.

²⁸ On Rome vs. Bilbilis in Martial Book 10 see Merli (2006), 338-40. On competing times as represented in *Agricola* see Ludolph (1997) 82-88, Hardie (2012) 277-84.

8), where the adjective *contumax* ('stubborn') also signals a Calgacus-like irreverence in the face of all that *domina Roma* has become.²⁹ Yet whereas Tacitus' Britain shall be violently, brutally subdued into a state of 'civilized' *quies et otium* (*Agr.*21.1³⁰) which begins with the eerie silence of devastation (*solitudinem faciunt*, 30.5, *vastum ubique silentium*, 38.2), Martial represents Bilbilis as a dignified, philosophically winning 'citadel' (*arces*, 10.104.4, *altam Bilbilin...videbis*, 10.104.6-7), a town that retains its own identity despite a far longer history of Romanisation. His rustic idyll (10.96) stands for the noble non-paradox of 'luxury' to be enjoyed in 'small means' (*tenues luxuriantur opes*, 10.96.6): there is no contradiction, he insists, in the virtuous, masculine poet enjoying well-earned leisure time – a point Agricola's supporters may or may not have wanted to carry over into Tacitus' *libellus*.

IV

The *Agricola*, as critics have observed, is shaped around a series of antitheses, or what turn out to be pairs, chiasmata, or double perspectives:³¹ Tacitus and Agricola themselves in tandem, first of all, as the quiet success stories of Domitianic tyranny, giving rise to the troubling, latent pairs Tacitus-Domitian, Agricola-Domitian, and to the uncertain oppositions Tacitus + Agricola vs. the brave or possibly reckless biographers and their subjects (Rusticus Arulenus, Thrasea Paetus, Herennius Senecio, Helvidius Priscus³²), together with Agricola vs. Domitian, and Calgacus vs. Domitian, where Calgacus stands for the heroic outspokenness oppressed and killed off by Domitianic tyranny. The antagonistic pair Rome and Britain reproduces this specular dynamic in a global perspective (where Britain now belongs to Rome, while figuring an old Rome, glimpsed only to be destroyed anew). General Agricola is also set in parallel/opposed to barbarian leader Calgacus, who looks at times more Roman than his counterpart, at least until we reach chapters 33-35 of Tacitus' text, where the two internal audiences react to a duet of speeches, and we are invited to prefer surging enthusiasm (*Agr.*35.1) to wild barbarian uproar (33.1).³³

²⁹ Despite continuing to write in elegiac couplets, Martial rejects the quasi-Ovidian 'elegisation' of his poetic identity: his body is the inverse of that of the effeminate *puella compta comas* (cf. *Ov.Am.*1.1.20). We spy traces, too, of Ovid's hirsute exilic book with its messed up hair at *Tr.*1.1.11-12, an icon at once of slave-like vulnerability and of poetic individuality, and specifically of the reinvention of a standard elegiac aesthetic.

³⁰ We are, as many have noted, prompted to recall the use of the same phrase in the ablative at *Agr.*6.3 (*quiete et otio*), where it describes the 'quiet and retirement' of Agricola's life between his quaestorship and his tribunate of the plebs. See Woodman and Kraus (2014) *ad loc.*

³¹ Cf. McGing (1982), Whitmarsh (2006).

³² Sailor (2008) 115 also suggests that 'Tacitus in a way equates him [i.e. Agricola] with the martyrs'.

³³ See Whitmarsh (2006) 317. Probably not worth a cross-ref, but I'm mentioning it just because of the focus on 97/98: I argue in König 2013 that there is also a parallel/opposition set up between Agricola and Frontinus; and that might be relevant, if you go with my line in my ch in this vol that Martial sets F up as an opposition to himself in 10.58 (and a little also in 10.48, where again he is a contemporary parallel whom M finds useful as a means of thinking about his poetic and political choices).

As Whitmarsh observes, the upshot of this nexus of similarities and differences in the *Agricola* is that any secure interpretative and ethical position for the Roman reader is necessarily destabilized to a degree. Like the book itself, we find ourselves on the fence, hopefully transitioning into better times but still fully immersed - as far as the world of *Agricola* goes, at least - in an anxious culture of *dissimulatio*. The less than concrete if not overtly ambivalent commitment to the ideology of quietism that emerges in the course of our reading has us scouring the work for all the clarifying pointers, all the answers to our questions, that are inevitably absent – as if they were rendered mute in the (embittered?) spirit of quietism itself. By its very intricacy, Sailor’s impressive articulation of the *Agricola* as representing (or enacting, through its virtuous readers) the solution to an imperial crisis of signification in which ‘words no longer correspond to things’ reveals the truth of Whitmarsh’s account. Yet, in part because of the irony that the virtuous reader of *Agricola* coincides perfectly with the old-school philologist determined to assert a single ‘correct’ (Sailor’s much-repeated adjective) meaning of a text, neither scholar can afford to admit that their positions are not in fact mutually exclusive. There can be little doubt –as Whitmarsh argues - that *Agricola* is rhetorically ambiguous and ‘profoundly troubling’,³⁴ but arguably Tacitus must force his readers to (re-)experience the confusions, challenges and risks of interpreting in such (unspecified) *tempora*, in order to identify the arduous process of trying to find a true and honest path through the fog (a process Sailor performs in exemplary style) with the valour worthy of Agricola, and of *Agricola*.³⁵

One of the strongest points of Sailor’s reading of *Agricola* is his emphasis on this text becoming a cultural and political *deed* through the active embodied memories (and I would add, determinedly lucid and courageous articulations) of its readers. It is interesting, then, that Martial spells out – not for the first time but now with overt political weight – the power of readers to decide his fate, at 10.1 and 10.2: indeed the trope of the active reader who embodies *libelli* and saves them from their all too evident materiality has Martial’s fingerprints all over it. Like the *Agricola*, moreover, Martial’s revised tenth book performs the shift between epochs, the contrast and interplay between memory and forgetting, between heroic outspokenness and cautious or guilty silence, and between the old and new Rome, or Rome and elsewhere, through and by means of the trope of twoness. In many ways there is nothing new here: as William Fitzgerald reminds us, individual epigrams regularly ‘manipulate puns, zeugma, antithesis and double entendre to put

³⁴ Whitmarsh (2006) 306.

³⁵ In an introductory footnote, Hardie (2012, 273) states that Whitmarsh (2006) locates more ambiguity than he himself will ‘allow’ in his reading of *Agricola*, yet ‘allow’ is an apt verb, suggesting the discipline involved in refusing to let this text’s internal struggles and tensions – and the trauma, disappointment and uneasy compromises they potentially bring to the surface – lead to critical paralysis. My only criticism of Sailor (2008) and Hardie (2012) is that they locate ‘correction’ within the text itself rather than in the reader’s interaction with it, and do not really acknowledge or analyse the fraught, politically, ethically and philosophically loaded process of this interaction.

things wittily together'.³⁶ Yet overtly, now, the secondariness of Martial's 'second edition' establishes a bivalency that both defines and haunts the volume, so that it is itself reminiscent (rather more blatantly than usual) of the anthology 'at odds with itself' produced by a plagiarist who mixes stolen poems with his own, at 10.100 (*quid, stulte, nostris versibus tuos misces? / cum litigante quid tibi, miser, libro?* 'Idiot, why do you mix your verses with mine? What do you want, you wretch, with a book that argues with itself?'). As well as recalling and updating the witty and self-implicating riff on plagiarism from Martial's own 'first book' (see especially 1.53.12: *stat contra dicitque tibi tua pagina 'fur es'*), Book 10's novel evocation of epigrammatic miscellany doubles up as a description of the book we are reading, a blend of old, updated poems with new epigrams, which presumably replace the now silenced, unacceptably 'Domitianic' poems. The final lines of 10.100 compare the plagiarist's *liber*, a blend of Martial's stellar poems and the poetaster's own pathetic efforts, to a 'silly' man trying to run with a wooden leg (*inepte, frustra crure ligneo curres*, 10.100.6), yet the verb *curres* itself stumbles at the end of Martial's unbalanced scazons, raising a double laugh: that which is by definition excluded from the new, improved Book 10 perhaps still lingers, after all, emerging in a series of metrical – if not political - limps.³⁷

While the *Agricola* looks to the future by reviving the 'old custom' of biography (1.1), and by remembering a particular version of the past, the test (and parlour game) for Martial's sharp-nosed reader-critics is to try to pick out which poems look newly inserted and which look recycled. Ingeniously, the poet's ploy is to get us to linger, to read harder. As John Henderson puts it, we are made to feel the undecidability of the instruction *utriusque fave*³⁸ ('favour both [editions]', 10.2.4), an experience that might now extend both to the *Agricola* and to the antagonisms of its reception: our reading is lured to participate enthusiastically in the zeitgeist of historical-political liminality. Martial conveniently grants his audience all the power to decide what vision of the Nervan-Trajanic age they want to project onto the book, which – they are told - they can make as brief as they like (10.1.1-2). Yet the challenge of ambidexterity seems an impossible or entrapping one from the start, or perhaps to put it another way, readers given free rein to remake this book get little or no help (or interference from the poet) in making decisions. There are some *apparent* giveaways, as Hannah Fearnley notes, such as 10.72, which announces that there is no place any more in Rome for an emperor who demands to be called *Dominus Deusque*, that this new era signals the return of truth. But we're tripped up by the barbed final verses, which make today's 'freedom of speech' sound rather like yesterday's censorship in a different guise: 'under this ruler, Rome, beware – if you are wise - of speaking the language of earlier days' (*hoc sub principe, si sapis, caveto,/ verbis, Roma,*

³⁶ Fitzgerald (2007) 4.

³⁷ Cf. Lorenz (2002) 219-31.

³⁸ Henderson (2001) 81.

prioribus loquaris, 10.72.12-13).³⁹ Likewise, in the metaphorical dinner party of 10.48, which as Alice König points out in chapter ten of this volume seems to celebrate the end of torture and anxiety, *libertas* amounts to being able to chat freely about chariot races⁴⁰ - hardly the radical reassertion of civil liberties we have been waiting for. Unless talk of the circus is always already a politically sensitive topic in which tensions between political factions were mirrored and played out: given that according to the epitome of Book 68 of Cassius Dio's histories Nerva abolished many horse races and other spectacles in an attempt to reduce expenditures,⁴¹ is the emphasis on circus gossip emblematic of how Nerva's *moderatio*, rather than (or as well as) Domitianic tyranny, put a dampener on plebeian pleasures? The bothness of edition 10(2) is always complicated by the in-between role of the never rewritten Book 11, dedicated to assassin Parthenius and buzzing with newly licenced Saturnalian festivity: Nerva's licence is subtly but perceptibly dampened in the new Book 10, yet we are also lured to inquire how many 'Nerva's' epigrams survived the edit.

Every time we feel we've got Martial cornered, his book finds a way to escape. The *Agricola* projects a similar, politically necessary/opportune slipperiness, as many have noted, and Tacitus' virtuous readers might well find a side order of *Epigrams* 10 cathartic, before they get back to being noble. Yet, as we pore over the two *libelli* side by side, Tacitean amphibology can also take shape, and firm up, in relation to the 'other' of Martial *Ep.*10, and alongside epigram's dizzying fragmentation of experience. Where Martial stands for ungovernable *fama* (although, he might counter, there is no such thing as bad publicity⁴²), Tacitus - as Philip Hardie argues - asserts the urgent ethical necessity of making subtle but fundamental distinctions between decent *fama* and its corrupt imperial calque.⁴³ At the same time, through a radically different generic filter, Martial's new edition (its precious reader now the dedicatee of the book in place of the all-powerful Domitian) can offer a more ludic and less painful model for such 'correction': both authors, for overlapping reasons, are banking on your *fides* (cf. *citra fidem*, *Agr.*1.2).

V.

Readers of Tacitus and Martial face different but overlapping versions of the challenge of how to interpret these works' fudging of (Domitianic-Trajanic/Nerva-Trajanic) *tempora*, a key word in both texts. Epigram's investment in the evening of diurnal time (at 10.20, the *libellus* is told to wait until nightfall before daring to knock on day-jobbing Pliny's eloquent door; before that is not its

³⁹ Fearnley (2003).626-7. Also see Lorenz (2002) 225-7.

⁴⁰ **Cross ref with page numbers**

⁴¹ Later in the epitome (68.7), it is reported that Trajan enlarged and embellished the circus, which had crumbled away in places, again implying that this aspect of Roman social life was neglected or suppressed by Nerva.

⁴² Cf. Sailor (2008, 91) on *Agr.*5.3 (under Nero 'good *fama* was as dangerous as bad')

⁴³ Hardie (2012) 273-84.

‘time’: *tempore non tuo*, 12) can now perhaps be recast in 10.48 as an aptitude for ‘cooler’ and more civilized times (after Neronian midday heat and Flavian afternoon steam) under Trajan.⁴⁴ Martial, not austere Pliny, leads the way to the party in 10.20, if that doesn’t come across as a little too *Nervan* (there are anxieties to be repressed here, too, about epigram’s timing and Bacchic propensities now seeming inappropriate). The old age of the poet himself, or the notion that his time is finally up,⁴⁵ also gets airbrushed in epigram’s suggestive vision of historical-as-diurnal time: this is just another ‘daily’ cycle, and epigram’s evening will surely come round again (leaving aside the possibility of tyranny’s return, at the next Neronian sunrise). Tacitus is just as canny in spinning *tempora* to suit the threshold-politics of his book. He repeats the word *tempora* thrice in the opening chapter, which takes us from *nostris temporibus* (1.1) to *tempora* (the final word, at 1.4). Indeed, at Pliny *Epist.*3.21.3, the phrase *nostris temporibus* appears to become a bookmark linking Martial Book 10 with *Agricola*, where Pliny states, ‘but in our day, this was one of the first things to fall out of fashion, along with other fine and honourable things’ (*nostris vero temporibus ut alia speciosa et egregia, ita hoc in primis exolevit*). Whereas Pliny ends his book by bringing praise back into vogue (the object of praise is Martial, who will ironically be ‘rewarded’ by being paid to pack his bags, as his time’s up – the *first* line of the edited *Ep.*10.20 now tells him ‘*ne tempore non tuo.../ pulses...ianuam, videto*’), Tacitus begins his *liber* by making precisely the same claim for *Agricola* (biographies honouring great men are no longer in vogue, but what you are reading will show you such practices still belong *nostris temporibus*). Tacitus, like Pliny, is conspicuously imprecise about the exact ‘times’ to which he refers: a little further on, the concluding line to chapter one (*tam saeva et infesta virtutibus tempora*. 1.4) is near-impossible to translate as it lacks (or has silenced) the verb *esse*, so that readers must speak up and infer the tense (*erant*, or *sunt*?):⁴⁶ Tacitus’ final *narratus* (46.4), counterbalancing the initial future participle *narraturo* (1.4), which refers to some unspecified, to be inferred point in the past or present (*isdem temporibus...nunc*, 1.3) will ensure *Agricola*’s *fama* in a (now positively open-ended) ‘eternity of times’ (*aeternitate temporum*, 46.4). Both texts – as Pliny may well have noticed - mould their own temporal and historical specificity while miming their liminal and still-uncertain place in time.

⁴⁴ Cf. König (cross ref) on 10.48’s apparent allegory of imperial time. I’ll add in a cross-ref to your wider reflection on time in *Ep.* 10 here.

⁴⁵ Cf. the anxiety about managing to leave Rome in time in the final line of 10.104 (*navem, scis, puto, non moratur unus*).

⁴⁶ See Woodman and Kraus (2014) *ad loc.*, and also on the preceding sentence in 1.4 (*at nunc narraturo mihi vitam defuncti hominis venia opus fuit quam non petissem incusaturus*), the subject of ongoing controversy not least because it is unclear what period of time Tacitus is referring to in *fuit* – Domitian’s reign or Nerva’s – and therefore whether or not he is explicitly saying that he attempted to write the *Agricola* under Domitian. Woodman and Kraus understand it as meaning that Tacitus had fully intended to write the biography but when he heard in 93 that Rusticus and Senecio had been executed, felt compelled to delay. Cf. Sailor (2008, 115) on the ‘ambiguous chronology’ of *Agricola*’s life following his return to Rome.

What's new in *Epigrams* 10 is that the doublespeak implicit in Martial's basic satirical technique (epigram's final punch relies on the pun), is now flooded with political potential. In synch with the 'bamboozling'⁴⁷ *Agricola*, Martial's forked meanings put us on the spot: what kind of cultural-political climate do we think we're living in? Are we, paradoxically, going to have to censor dissident voices, put on our political blinkers, in order to believe in real change? Doubleness, or the concept of two in one, is developed in a characteristic medley of ways in Book 10, trumping even the *Agricola*'s puzzle of pairs. Leading off from the trope of virtual monuments and human memory trumping the monumental power of actual marble (*marmora Messallae findit caprificus*, 10.2.9, cf. *quae marmore aut aere finguntur...simulacra vultus imbecilla ac mortalia sunt*, *Agr.*46.3), Martial gives us the hybrid book (*lector, utrique fave*, 10.2.4). Martial's putative 'response' to the *Agricola* (Book 10 begins with the same tight knot of allusions to Augustan *fama* with which *Agricola* ends) is perhaps also to be spied in his uncharacteristically perfectionistic *nota leges...sed lima rasa recenti* (10.2.3), after Tacitus' mock-amateur posing at *Agr.*3.2 (*non tamen pigebit vel incondita ac rudi voce memoriam prioris servitutis ac testimonium praesentium bonorum composuisse*). We are encouraged to enthuse over the double-act of poet-reader, where it is the *lector* who will ensure an illustrious 'I will survive' duet over time with Horace and Ovid (*et meliore tui parte superstes eris*, 10.2.8, cf. *fama superstes* Horace *Odes* 2.2.8; *non omnis moriar multaque pars mei / vitabit Libitinam*, *Odes* 3.30.6-7; *pars mei multa superstes erit*, Ovid *Amores* 1.15.41, alongside *Am.*3.15.20; *fama superstes erit*, *Tristia* 3.7.50; *parte tamen meliore mei ...ferar*, *Met.*15.875-6).⁴⁸ Lines 47-50 of *Tristia* 3.7 potentially tinge this ever-evolving stemma with Ovid's assertion of the poet's superior control (vis à vis the emperor) over his own *fama* ('Caesar could have no power over that', Ovid writes at v.48). However, the 'thefts' (*furta*) that will not harm paper at 10.2.11 are immediately brought to life in the twin-set of 10.3 and 10.5, where Martial's anonymous, shadowy enemy-double, imitating Ovid's Ibis, is threatening not just to smear Martial's PR stunt of 'positive', 'memorialising', 'personalized' *damnatio memoriae* as performed in 10.2, but also to recreate his own nasty, unharmonious version of Martial's 'two books in one', allowing us to sneer at the split monument, the *nigra fama*, that was once far removed from the polished, politically correct *libellus* presented in 10.2.⁴⁹ Martial shall be renowned for his (own highly controlled spin on) self-deprecation and self-exposure, which wouldn't serve Tacitus in the slightest – unless it can be called on to stand for the useful option of 'inconsequentiality'.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Whitmarsh (2006) 305.

⁴⁸ Cf. Rimell (2008) 65-71; Hardie (2012) 327.

⁴⁹ Cf. Rimell (2008) 71-76.

⁵⁰ See Sailor (2012), who argues that the *Agricola*'s prologue is at pains to maintain for the work the option to be important or to be inconsequential: Martial's poetics of paradox can encode this doubleness.

While post-Ovidian games with the shapes and rhythms of the elegiac couplet (the most popular metre in the *Epigrams*) are par for the course for seasoned readers of Martial, in Book 10 they are set up to retrace the Ovidianized political manoeuvrings of the opening two poems. 10.1 and 10.2 tinge Martial's playful, 'young' rebirth in 98 with the sprightly equilibration of the epigram fronting Ovid's updated, twenty-something juvenilia - the *Amores*:

Si nimius videor seraque coronide longus
esse liber, legito pauca: libellus ero.
terque quaterque mihi finitur carmine parva
pagina: fac tibi me quam cupis ipse brevem.

Martial *Ep.*10.1

Qui modo Nasonis fueramus quinque libelli
tres sumus; hoc illi praetulit auctor opus.
ut iam nulla tibi nos sit legisse voluptas,
at levior demptis poena duobus erit.

Ovid, *Amores epigramma ipsius*

Do we glimpse already here an agonistic response to Tacitus' debut? Traces of Ovid's youthful, career-boosting second edition in *Epigrams* 10 might also bear with them Ovid's agonistic self-fashioning via allusion to the hexameter 'epigram' attached in some editions to Virgil's *Aeneid*.⁵¹ while Virgil's epic was 'updated' to advertise the great poet's career only after his death, Ovid – and Martial after him – remake their works themselves, while still very much alive, or in Martial's case, brought back from the dead. Any bifocal allusion to Ovid's career incipit + Virgil's career apex would, we have to admit, capture the all-encompassing genius of Martial's tenth volume perfectly. Especially if we were to hear echoing through Tacitus' hoarse, mock-humble opening (*incondita ac rudi voce*, *Agr.*3.3) the voice of novice Corydon in Virgil's first opus, hurling *haec incondita* into the woods (*Ecl.*2.4). While Tacitus begins, Martial begins and ends, ends and begins again, *climactically*: what kind of contest is this?

'Survival' is cannily appropriated (and rebranded) by Martial as always already epigram's speciality. In the *Agricola*, meanwhile, the term is heavy with loss and tinged with guilt, and belongs to the stammering new vocabulary of *now*. Those who survive (*superstites sumus*) at

⁵¹ *Ille ego qui quondam gracili modulatus avena / carmen, et egressus silvis vicina coegi / ut quamvis avido parerent arva colono, / gratum opus agricolis, at nunc horrentia Martis....* Cf. Conte (1974) 63-4.

*Agr.*3.2 bear the scars of trauma, so much so that they have ‘outlived’ themselves. Like *tempora*, the word *superstes* frames both texts, and here the points of contact (whether they were fully intended by one or both authors) seem designed to tease. Martial’s Horatian-Ovidian *et meliore tui parte superstes eris* (‘you will survive in the better part of yourself’, 10.8) appear to echo and recast the final words of the *Agricola*, *superstes erit*, ‘he will survive’ (*Agr.*46.4), or vice versa. Commentators on Tacitus’ text recognize that *superstes erit* ‘is an Ovidian tag’,⁵² yet don’t point out that it becomes such in part *through* Martial’s undeletable epigrammatization of Ovid (whichever direction we imagine allusion working in here).⁵³ It’s a salutary reminder for a volume interested in the distinctiveness – or otherwise – of Nervan-Trajanic-Hadrianic interactions that epoch-spanning Martial has already restyled Augustan intertextual strategies for post-96 literary culture. Tacitean terseness is perhaps bound to look like it is inspired (tainted?) by epigram’s snide laconics, whether that is the intention or not. The brevity of Woodman and Kraus’ comments on what they call an Ovidian tag at *Agr.*46.4 is indicative of a reluctance among scholars to pursue markers of Tacitus’ engagement with small-scale poetry (epigram, lyric, elegy):⁵⁴ we should not underestimate this engagement, but more precisely, juxtaposing Martial and Tacitus allows us to see that both authors employ a density of hyperlinks (coded as Augustan) to frame their own context-specific assertions of the longevity and influence of winged words. *Superstes* comes to stand not just for *spes* and *fides* at this delicate historical moment, but also for a traceable poetic *stirps* that has redefined survival – through Ovid in particular – as the endless, playful reinvention of the same, and in terms of quasi-biological memory embodied in and transformed by readers. Rome’s weakened body (*Agr.*3.1) draws *animus*, potentially, from that.

VI

Yet how might we measure the (playful) risk implicit in the mere inkling of an *Agricola*-*Ep.*10 duo? We might note that one way for Martial to diffuse the political contradictions of epigrammatic monumentality (rewritten as a *damnatio memoriae* of the Domitianic book that must be at once a forgetting and a remembering) is by allowing the heavily political concept of the double volume to mutate within the socio-political laboratory of the *libellus* itself. Hence in the elegiac 10.71, the two-books-in-one premise is hinted at yet also painted over by the image of two bodies on a single pyre (*arserunt uno funera bina rogo*, 6), where memorializing noble lives is subtly linked not with *saeva et infesta tempora* but with happy endings, as well as with pleasing the reader of epitaphs

⁵² Woodman and Kraus’s term (2014, *ad loc*). Their commentary does not develop nuanced discussion of the nexus of allusions in the final chapter of *Agricola* in Smith (2002), Harrison (2007) and Hardie (2012, 282-84): no scholar, however, mentions Martial.

⁵³ See Hinds (2007) and Rimell (2008) on Martial’s reception of Ovid generally.

⁵⁴ Austin’s comments (1939) on the ‘feel of lyric’ in the *Agricola* epilogue are highly suggestive.

alongside the empowered reader of short-as-you-like *libelli* (*brevem titulum marmoris huius ama*, 10.71.2, cf. *fac tibi me quam cupis esse brevem*, 10.1.4). Once the poet has taken the edge off *bothness*, he can deliver an epigram like 10.81, which remakes the imperative *utrique fave* of 10.2.4 as the prostitute Phyllis' trick of satisfying two customers simultaneously, taking them both inside her singular, versatile body:⁵⁵ note how the tag *utrique fave* is reshuffled at the end of both the first pentameter and the second hexameter of the poem, and how the engine of embodied elegiac rhythms (Phyllis' *pes* lifted at the final caesura) propels us back to the sexually passive book open to readers' desire, at 10.1:

Cum duo venissent ad Phyllida mane fututum
 et nudam cuperet sumere **uterque prior**,
 promisit pariter se Phyllis **utrique daturam**,
 et dedit: ille pedem sustulit, hic tunicam.

10.81

After barely a distraction from 10.82 (if we are reading the book straight through), the trope of the double *opus* or textual/human corpus returns at 10.83, a skit in hendecasyllables featuring a man named Marinus whose comb-over tends to flip over in the wind to reveal a bald pate, so that he ends up being not one man but two (now bald, now not, an oxymoronic *calvus comatus*). Nothing is *turpius* than this (10.83.11), though we have heard Martial advocate 'simplicity' before (*absit a iocorum nostrorum simplicitate malignus interpretas*, *Epigr.*1.pref.8, cf. *vis tu simplicius senem fateri*, 10.83.9), and been tempted to read that as an invitation to read suspiciously from the outset. Might Marinus' cover-up, or double-act, which relies on exploiting *tempora comata* (long-haired temples) hint at the tight-rope act of the double book, at Martial's canny exploitation of the *tempora* he finds himself in, and their association with renewal and rejuvenation, as he attempts to engineer his own makeover in the same old genre? How could it possibly? How could it possibly not?

Likewise, the string of epigrams about looking back in time in Martial's revised tenth book revisit the memorializing spiel and uncanny rebirth or afterlife of the poet in 10.2. In 10.23 we admire the ironically named Antonius Primus, seventy-five years old but able to reminisce about those long years, about which we do not (specifically) talk, with neither guilt, nor horror, but pure pleasure (this epigram's twin, 10.32, pictures the same man looking back with joy at an image of his younger self): *hoc est / vivere bis, vita posse priore frui*, Martial concludes ('to be able to enjoy former life is to live twice over' 10.23.8), just like (or perhaps just unlike) this book, which is shady

⁵⁵ Compare 10.62, the epitaph to a matron who had ten children but only knew one cock.

about its own past life under a now vilified regime. This is followed by an epigram marking Martial's own birthday (10.24): again, any mention of the trauma of looking back – so central to Tacitus' opening chapters - is conspicuously absent. Poem 10.38, the hendecasyllable partner to 10.35 (about Calenus' wife Sulpicia, herself a personification of doubleness) is also about remembering the past fifteen years (*quindecim...annos*, 1-3) which just happens to be the exact length of Domitian's rule, as marked by Tacitus at 3.2.⁵⁶ Yet this time is now recalled as unadulterated domestic bliss. In fact, Calenus reckons his life *began* when he married: the years 81-96, or (if we are to imagine this is one of the 'new' poems, 83-98⁵⁷) have been the best of his life. It is as if Martial were facetiously overwriting Tacitus' key statement on the Domitian years, surreptitiously codifying epigram's distinctive and (newly) provocative *Weltanschauung*.

quid, si per **quindecim annos**, grande mortalis aevi spatium, multi fortuitis casibus, promptissimus quisque saevitia principis interciderunt, pauci et (ut ita dixerim) non modo aliorum sed etiam nostri superstites sumus, exemptis e media vita tot annis, quibus iuvenes ad senectutem, senes prope ad ipsos exactae aetatis terminus per silentium venimus?

Agr.3.2

It is perhaps inevitably less entertaining to flip this inference around, and to read Tacitus both subtly erasing Martial's vulgar diffusion of perspectives on the recent past, and taking back *quindecim annos* for himself. In the world of epigram, meanwhile, immersed as it is in synthesizing and repackaging the minutiae of social life, those fifteen years have not (necessarily) been a living hell. For Sulpicia and Calenus - whether we are to judge them as politically apathetic lovers who like all good elegiac couples reject the harsh reality of Roman public life and inhabit their own little utopia, or as heroes in a political resistance determined to remake Roman *tempora* within peaceful and only mock-bellucose domestic space – every hour of those years was worth counting, relishing, and thanking the gods for: *indulsit deus*, 'a god bestowed [this]', 10.38.3. Though we are naturally *not* thinking of *dominum deumque*, titles now unutterable in a Rome that has risen from the Styx (cf. 10.72). Tacitus, presumably, would file Sulpicia and Calenus under *desidia* and *dulcedo inertiae*, that sensual laziness that *some* people came to love under Domitian (*amatur*, *Agr.3.1*). Yet in silent dialogue with *Agricola* 3.2, Martial can reinvent the powerful tension animating his trademark epigram book, a 'virtual society' that is both permeable to the surrounding world and at the same time separate from or fenced off from it. Those 'fifteen years' were Rome's years, Domitian's

⁵⁶ On 10.35 see Buongiovanni (2012) 124-182.

⁵⁷ And if so, with no distinction to be made between the 'Domitian years' and 96-98.

years, yet they also belong to a poet empowered to remodel urban environments and political landscapes, to carve out his own spaces, and to hone a (now not just self-interested but defensive, defiant, even *triumphant*) ‘art of survival’.⁵⁸ Tacitus’ speech seems to underpin Martial’s provocations, which – to put it mildly – now offer another angle on Tacitean quietism.

VII

Martial’s *libellus* celebrates the survival of the book-as-poet into a new age, and the ability of epigram and the epigrammatist to thrive in any environment, to constantly elude incriminating political ‘seriousness’ and to reinvent itself as necessary. Meanwhile, the notoriously difficult *Agricola* vaunts the survival of one man’s memory in the minds of Tacitus’ readers, and aspires to ensure the future survivability of Tacitus himself, who like Martial from *Epigrams* 10 onward, will enjoy the Nervan-Trajanic ‘afterlife’ without dying. It is perhaps significant, then, that Martial was an almost exact contemporary of *Agricola* (who was born in 40CE). Unlike Tacitus’ father-in-law, however, who did not live to see the happy event of Trajan’s accession (*Agr.*44.5), this poet has *literally* survived: he celebrates the fact in a birthday poem at 10.24, where he asks to be allowed to live another 18 years, bringing him up to a perfect $15 \times 5 = 75$, matching the grand age of Antonius Primus in the previous epigram. Whereas the first edition of *Epigrams* 10 was published in the spirit of *festinata cura* (10.2.1) but has been born again, *Agricola*’s end, though *festinata* (‘premature’, ‘hurried’, *Agr.*44.5), was terminal. Martial, in short, is already well-placed – were there to be such a reckoning – to trump Tacitus’ powers of monumentalisation (his biography can’t, after all, bring back *Agricola* from the grave): Pliny affirms this even as he underscores the end of Martial’s life and ‘time’ in his implicit alignment of Martial-*Agricola* as objects of praise (*Epist.*3.21). Yet if we begin to envisage Martial interacting with Tacitus, such dialogues can only help both parties endure. Moreover, if we were to read into *Epigrams* 10 a subtle analogy between the poet and *Agricola*, we might sense Martial’s bid to attach himself to Tacitus’ astute recuperation of his father-in-law’s *gloria*, which on one hand was stifled by Domitian (*Agricola* is forced to lie low and to ‘drink deep’ of politically compliant *otium* when he returns to Rome in *Agr.*40.4, just as Martial fights to make the best of his ‘retirement’ to otiose yet dignified Bilbilis) but on the other is proven to be unsilenceable.⁵⁹ Through *Agricola*, and by outliving *Agricola*, Martial can potentially refashion a paradoxical (that is, quintessentially epigrammatic) role for himself as humble, downtrodden poet

⁵⁸ Cf. Fitzgerald (2007) 9, 12: ‘Martial...adopts the persona of the struggling dependant not to give voice to the resentment of the unrewarded but to explore the art of survival’... ‘The epigram becomes the art of survival as Martial dishes the dirt, takes revenge, enlists allies, and solicits friends.’

⁵⁹ Cf. Sailor (2008) 99.

who is as much a victim of Domitian as anyone else but who is also wildly, undeniably successful, and who deserves to play a part in Tacitus-Pliny's creation of a new political order.

Yet Martial, whose second edition reminds us that he always does the same thing (at least) twice (*bis*, cf. 1.44.3), cannot resist spinning out rather more grotesque afterlives around the ennobling and now Tacitean maxim *superstes erit*. In 10.67, Plutia –presumably a prostitute, or a matrona who liked to take multiple lovers – has outlived ‘all the crows’ (*iam cornicibus omnibus superstes*, 10.67.5), and even in her grave she itches (*prurit*) with lust: epigram's unquashable love of *variatio* is captured and sullied here in this nymphomaniac body, which must also figure the rebellious materiality of Martial's poetic monuments. Earlier at 10.48, Martial and his poet friends look forward to a miscellaneous feast fit for epigram's table, featuring a mix of classy dishes, peasant food, and leftovers, including a prosciutto that has already ‘survived’ three dinners (*cenis tribus iam perna superstes*, 10.48.17). Martial is perhaps regurgitating memories of Trimalchian tyranny better left behind in the boiling midday heat of Nero's baths: we recall the scene at *Satyricon* 40-41, where a roast boar is carried into the dining room wearing a cap of freedom. Trimalchio explains that the boar had been ‘freed’, that is declined by the guests, in a previous dinner, so now it returns as a *libertus*. But how much (of the past, of Petronius' text) are we meant to remember here? To what extent are we invited to recall the facetious creativity of the Neronian tyrant presenting itself as ‘freedom’? Martial is also presumably jesting around the Ennian-Augustan trope of poetry ‘surviving on the mouths of men’: epigram's dishes survive (although, necessarily, not for long) in the *actual* mouths of guests/readers, who consume them physically and come back for more.

This inaugural dinner promotes the familiar ‘piatto unico’ of epigram as perfectly situated to unify old and new times: early greens and just ripe fruit announcing the new spring next to good honest fare like workman's beans and a young goat snatched from the jaws of a tyrannical-sounding wolf, with remnants of past dinners and vintage wine thrown in too. But will this *cenula unā mensā*, evocative of other epigrammatic dinners in which the joke is on the diners, repeat on us? 10.48 promises jokes without bile (*sine felle*, 21), the licence to speak without wishing later that you had been silent. Any possible satirical epigrammatisations of *Agricola* must surely be received in the spirit of festive free speech - who wouldn't cheer Martial on, given the occasion? Still, we don't need Pliny's response to Book 10 in *Epistles* 3.21 to tell us that *ioci sine felle* is itself, in all likelihood, a joke, coming from a poet who had *plurimum...salis...et fellis* (‘a lot of salty wit and bile’, *Epist.* 3.21.1⁶⁰). In the spirit of recalling the ingenious exchange between Martial and Pliny, are we already also remembering Tacitus' monumentalizing *libellus*, and licencing Martial to blast

⁶⁰ Cf. *Ep.* 7.25.3, and 10.45 (denying the sharp, vinegary taste of this smoothed-out book).

new life into all those decrepit, embittered ‘survivor’ bodies of *Agr.3*? Which *remedium* do the public prefer - the paradigm of survival as reinvention, as quasi-biological process, one that celebrates the instant detox of burps and bowel-loosening (10.48.7-10), or the cautious *tardiora remedia* (*Agr.3.1*) prescribed in historical prose? Miscellany as jostling urban bodies and Saturnalian lucky dips (Martial), or as the rhetorical and philosophical method required to temper enthusiasm and to ‘combine the advantageous with the honourable’ (Tacitus)?⁶¹ This is a test of virtue if ever there was one: Martial’s reinvented epigram entices us to believe that if we chose the former, now *that’s libertas*. At the same time, Tacitus’ (soon to be reinforced by Pliny’s) appropriation of epigrammatic mixing as the new recipe for *pax Romana* could well make Martial’s quick-fix menu look like yesteryear’s tat.

VIII

How to conclude? In the face of silence, there can be no doubt that *we* – the empowered readers on whose memories Tacitus-Agricola and Martial rely – are making these potential interactions happen: the scope of this essay has been to turn up the volume, to get silence to speak (orate, hiss). As a result it has become harder than ever to underestimate the extent of Martial’s polish and ambition in Book 10, and likewise much harder to ‘correct’ *Agricola*, at least not without immersing ourselves self-consciously in that process, under the spotlight of timely, culturally and politically specific interrelation. And when we do, we find excitement, risk, contamination, humour with the power to lighten, cut down and upturn, plus a sense of striving towards firm self-definition in the awareness that this striving is bound to never quite succeed, that singular distinction blurs in *tempora* that have yet to come into focus, in a climate of exchange and commutuality. The key function of both *Epigrams 10* and *Agricola* is to create and consolidate old and new relationships in a community of readers and listeners: but they also invite us to participate in that venture, to put our tired bodies and jaded minds into it, to access this live, drawn-out historical moment for the opportunities it offers for reading (that is, *living, doing*) differently.

⁶¹ *Temperavit Agricola vim suam ardoremque compescuit, ne incresceret, peritus obsequi eruditusque utilia honestis miscere*. As Woodman and Kraus note (2014, *ad loc.*), the terms employed here are familiar from philosophy, and especially from Cicero. Whereas the conventional moral stance consists in preferring *honestum* to *utile* (cf. Cicero *Off.* 1 and 2, Horace, *C.4.9.40-1*), Agricola combines the two, implicitly politicizing the aesthetic principle advocated by Horace at *Ars Poetica* 343 (*omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit utile dulci*). Also see Whitmarsh (2006) 319.

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