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STATIUS ON RUTILIUS GALLICUS

Ronald Syme

I. When city is matched with city for their harvest of senators, sharp contrasts illustrate their rank and fame, or the caprice of testimony. Not least in Transpadane Italy.¹ While Verona and Brixia show abundance, Augusta Taurinorum comes out with only two, both of them consuls, viz. C. Rutilius Gallicus (*cos. suff.?* 71) and Q. Glitius Atilius Agricola (*suff.* 97). They achieved singular distinction. Each held a consular command (Germania Inferior and Pannonia), each became consul for the second time and *praefectus urbi*.

Agricola owes his entire existence to epigraphy.² Gallicus, disclosed by sundry inscriptions, earned ample commemoration from Statius in one of his earliest poems (*Silvae* 1,4).

Not long after the Secular Games of the year 88 Gallicus fell grievously ill. Debility or age in the sexagenarian Prefect of the City was not the cause, but anxious devotion to his tasks, *vigilesque suo pro Caesare curae* (52ff.). The poet acclaims his restoration to health. Nevertheless, Gallicus passed away in the near sequel, as Statius had to confess in the preface to Book I. That happened in 91 or 92, during a pestilence or a sequence of unhealthy seasons.³ In 92 another senator succeeded to the priesthood held by Rutilius Gallicus.⁴

II. Statius furnishes a selective account of his official career (not always precise or in strict order), concluding with the city prefecture at the

¹ See now G. Alföldy in *Epigrafia e ordine senatorio* (1982) II 309ff.

² PIR², G 181. For his career, ILS 1021, expounded by Groag in *RE*, Supp. III (1918), 786—789. No fresh evidence since then. The city yielded no fewer than eleven inscriptions — with only three for Gallicus (ILS 1007f.; CIL V 6989).

³ Dio 57,11,6, cf. Tacitus (1958) 69; *Some Arval Brethren* (1980) 21ff.

⁴ ILS 5025.

time of Domitian's triumph over the Dacians, in 89. It has to be elucidated and supplemented with help from a variety of inscriptions. Augusta Taurinorum contributes, Rome, Africa, and a military diploma of the year 78. The document of prime value is a dedication set up at Ephesus by an equestrian officer. It registers the posts from the military tribunate to Gallicus' designation to his consulship (ILS 9499).

Combined, the heterogeneous evidence produced the following schema:

- 1) Tribune in XIII Gemina, in Pannonia.
- 2) Quaestor, aedile, legate of XV Apollinaris, in Pannonia: c. 53, cf. CIL III 4591.
- 3) Praetor, c. 55.
- 4) *Legatus provinciae Galaticae*. That is, under Domitius Corbulo, governor of Cappadocia-Galatia.
- 5) *Sodalis Augustalis*, in 68, taking the place of Nero. ILS 5025.
- 6) Consul suffect, presumably in 71 or 72.
- 7) *Pontifex*, ILS 9499, etc.
- 8) Imperial legate in Africa, replacing the proconsul and conducting the census. In 73/4.
- 9) Legate of Germania Inferior, probably from 76 to 79. CIL XVI 23 (of April 78).
- 10) *Praefectus urbi*, in office in 89.
- 11) Consul suffect for the second time, ILS 1007, probably in 90.

Such was the basis of the full and excellent account presented by Groag in the year 1914.⁵

III. Sundry problems subsisted. Inscriptions accrue, also information on the flank that permits closer dates. First, a minor matter. Two inscriptions from Tripolitania now certify Rutilius Gallicus in Africa in the first half of 74.⁶ That disposes of an elaborate argument designed to dis sever the post from the censorship of Vespasian and put it earlier, in 71.⁷

⁵ RE I A (1914), 1255—1263.

⁶ G. di Vita Évrard, *Quad. Arch. Lib.* 10 (1979) 77ff., whence AE 1979, 648f. (boundary stones marking the territory of Lepcis).

⁷ A. B. Bosworth, *Athenaeum* 51 (1973) 69, cf. 66.

Second, the iterated consulate. Some scholars were disposed to assign it to 90 or to the vicinity of that year.⁸ Indirect evidence brought the solution, when for 85 the colleague of the Emperor was established as T. Aurelius Fulvus (*suff.*? 70), consul for the second time.⁹ A place was thus rendered available for Rutilius Gallicus as consul suffect with Catullus Messallinus (*cos.* 73), to be followed by Arrecinus Clemens (*suff.* 73), all *consules iterum*. That found subsequent confirmation, and is now accepted.¹⁰

Third, the inception of the city prefecture, which Gallicus was holding in 89. It was desirable to ascertain the predecessor, and the end of that tenure. The revised reading of an inscription shows Arrecinus Clemens *praef.urb.* instead of *praet.urb.*¹¹ This man was close kin to the dynasty. In fact, the maternal uncle of Julia, the daughter of Titus.¹² He is named among the victims of Domitian.¹³ His fate should fall in September of 87, when the Arval Brethren rendered thanksgivings *ob detecta scel(era) nefar(iorum)*.¹⁴ Rutilius Gallicus, it follows, succeeded Arrecinus Clemens in the eminent dignity.

IV. That is not all. A fresh look at a familiar text can import a startling novelty. Before the allusion to the second consulship of Gallicus (82f.) Staius presents

*quid geminos fascis magnaue iterata revolvam
iura Asiae?* (80f.).

Those words indicated the post of praetorian legate to the proconsul of Asia, held for a biennium. Such was the universal belief.¹⁵ Not so.

⁸ Thus Dessau in PIR¹, R 167; Groag, o.c. 1261.

⁹ JRS 43 (1953) 155 = Roman Papers (1979) 243f. Hence '? 85' in Tacitus (1958) 643 and 644.

¹⁰ L. Vidman, *Fasti Ostienses* (ed. 2, 1982) 44, cf. 79.

¹¹ AE 1947, 40 (Pisaurum), as emended by J. Devreker, *Epigraphica* 38 (1976) 180. The text has *praet.* beyond doubt. See the photograph published by G. Mennella and G. Cresci Marrone in *Supplementa Italica* 1 (1981) 87.

¹² H. Castritius, *Historia* 18 (1969) 492ff. Suetonius was in error when he asserted that Julia was the daughter of Marcia Furnilla (*Divus Titus* 4,2).

¹³ Suetonius, *Dom.* 11,2.

¹⁴ CIL VI 2065.

¹⁵ PIR¹, R 167; Groag, o.c. 1258. The Ephesian inscription (ILS 9499) contributed thereto.

Gallicus himself was proconsul, as now emerges.¹⁶ He governed the province not long after Caecina Paetus (*suff.*? 70), the proconsul of 80/81.¹⁷

Two years for a proconsul, most abnormal. An easy explanation avails. The successor to Paetus had died in office. Gallicus, next in the sortition, took his place for the remaining months, and continued for a full year thereafter.

In the context of mortality, an item on casual record deserves a passing mention. Caecina Flaccus, the young son of Paetus the proconsul, perished at Brundisium.¹⁸ That is, on the way to Asia or thence returning. The great Roman plague of the year 80 may not have exhausted its ravages. As concerns Asia, the decease of a governor is no surprise, although none is on previous attestation, and the province could not compete with lethal Syria.¹⁹

V. A summary review of this order may offer convenient and economical use for future commentators of the *Silvae* as well as for fanciers of senatorial careers, although much more could be said about Gallicus the consular.²⁰ The present discourse must now declare a different purpose. Namely to examine and exploit a passage that discloses his ancestor.

At an early point the poem invoked Apollo, who in due course enlists his disciple, the god of healing. Apollo goes on to define the object of their solicitude:

*genus ipse suis permissaque retro
nobilitas* (68f.).

Gallicus is the first consul in the family, and he confers distinction on his forebears. Next therefore grandfather and father:

*nec origo latet, sed luce sequenti
vincitur et magno gaudet cessisse nepoti* (69f.)

¹⁶ See the argument of W. Eck, *AJP* (1984), forthcoming.

¹⁷ For the tenure of Paetus, W. Eck, *Chiron* 12 (1982) 304.

¹⁸ *CIL* IX 39.

¹⁹ For the detail about Syria, *ZPE* 41 (1981) 125ff. = *Roman Papers* III (1984) 1366ff.

²⁰ See further 'The Acme of Transpadane Italy', forthcoming.

That is to say, the word *origo* takes on a personal meaning, as in the phrase of Virgil '*Aeneas Romanae stirpis origo*' (Aen. 12,166). Thus *origo* passes into *avus* in what follows. The ancestor is far from obscure (i.e. equestrian). He is surpassed in status by the next generation, and he is happy to concede primacy to Gallicus the consular, the *magnus nepos*.

So far no problem. The exposition now proceeds with

*prima togae virtus illi quoque: clarus et ingens
eloquio; mox innumeris exercita castris
occiduas primasque domos et sole sub omni
permeruit iurata manus; nec in otia pacis
permissum laxare animos ferrumque recingi* (71—75).

Those five lines have failed to be properly interpreted, so it appears (see further below).

First of all, the identity of the person whose earliest excellence was likewise (*illi quoque*) civilian, in the field of oratory, where he stood out as *clarus et ingens / eloquio*. He is not Gallicus. The word *quoque* supplies the clue. It refers back to the eloquence of Gallicus, on show in an earlier passage: *quamquam tibi, Gallice, maius / eloquium, fandique opibus sublimis abundas* (34f.).

Therefore the grandfather. He began with forensic performance (*prima togae virtus*), and he went on in the sequel to a prolonged military career in the lands of the world empire west and east, with no abatement or relaxation at any time. Observe above all *permeruit iurata manus*, an emphatic and revealing phrase. The verb is of extreme rarity.²¹ Further, it evokes *stipendia*, the years of service, while *iurata manus* specifies the military oath.

The man is a professional, an officer: perhaps a centurion to begin with, advancing through the primipilate to equestrian status. The language here employed denies the *tribunus laticlavus* or the commander of a legion. They belong apart, they are members of the *amplissimus ordo*.

No need therefore to adduce the facts concerning Rutilius Gallicus as registered on the Ephesian inscription. Before his consulship he had only two spells with the armies, and brief at that, namely a year or two as tribune, two or three when legionary legate.

²¹ No other specimen is cited in OLD.

Misconceptions are latent in poetical phraseology. Apollo is made to introduce the whole career of Rutilius Gallicus in a singular fashion:

hunc Galatea vicens ausa est incessere bello
(me quoque), perque novem timuit Pamphylia messis
Pannoniusque ferox arcuque horrenda fugaci
Armenia et patiens Latii iam pontis Araxes (76—79).

This exordium calls for comment on several counts. First of all, Galatia was not a military province. Second, Apollo's reference to the Gallic attack on Delphi, concealed in *me quoque*, is remote if not inept. Third, Pamphylia was not a part of the Galatian province either when Gallicus was there or when Statius wrote. Fourth, the mention of Armenia and the bridging of Araxes should not deceive. Gallicus had no part in the campaigns of Domitius Corbulo, the legate of Cappadocia-Galatia. He was put in charge of Galatia either in 55 when Corbulo took up his command, or in 58, when the ambitious general embarked on active warfare. Fifth, the poet subjoins Pannonia to Galatia, referring to a period of nine seasons (*novem ... messis*). Yet the two posts are diverse, not continuous, not in that order. How apportion those nine years? Presumably two or three for the command of XV Apollinaris at Carnuntum in the vicinity of 53, with a sexennium for Galatia later on, after the praetorship of Gallicus.²²

So much for his military experience. In contrast, the grandfather, with *innumera castra* and never laying aside the sword. It is enough to abide by the text: *hunc Galatea vicens* (75) stands in patent antithesis to *illi quoque*. Editors would do well to indent at *hunc*.

None the less, the passage in question (71—75) was assigned to Gallicus by Groag, without doubt or hesitation, as furnishing a preliminary and generalized description of his career.²³ Translators are vague or consenting.²⁴

²² By inadvertence the whole nine years was assigned to Galatia in Tacitus (1958) 79C.

²³ Groag, o.c. 1257. And likewise by A. Hardie, *Statius and the Silvae* (1983) 188: "Gallicus as *orator* is dealt with in 71f.: *prima togae virtus illi quoque: clarus et ingens / eloquio*. Next comes Gallicus as *bellator* (72—79)."

²⁴ Thus J. H. Mozley (Loeb, 1928). Cf. M. T. Izaak in the edition of H. Frère (Budé, 1944) rendering l. 71 as "ce fut d'abord sous la toge qu'il révéla, lui aussi, ses mérites". In his 'Notes complémentaires' Frère assigned the line to

VI. To sum up the family. First, the grandfather, an equestrian officer who despite prolonged service did not get as far as an imperial procuratorship. The *patria* of Rutilius Gallicus happens to yield a parallel. Glitius T.f. Barbarus, a *primipilaris*, became prefect of a cohort and military tribune.²⁵ A relative, it is presumed, of Q. Glitius Atilius Agricola, but hardly his father or grandfather.²⁶ The consular was 'P.f.', his paternal name Atilius, as the *Fasti Ostienses* of 97 demonstrate.²⁷

Second, the father, on curt mention under *luce sequenti* (69). Having outdistanced his parent (as there stated), he must have acquired the *latus clavus* and thereby *dignitas senatoria*. If he entered the Senate, he was cut short before attaining rank or position worth notice.

The consular, it thus emerges, inherited membership of the *amplissimus ordo*. Therefore socially far superior to some of the Transpadanes who achieved high eminence. Verginius Rufus from Mediolanum was only *equestri familia, ignoto patre*; and Vibius Crispus was 'said to have been born at Vercellae'.²⁸ However, Vestricius Spurinna, close coeval to Gallicus, might have had for parent a minor senator, likewise Atilius Agricola.

Those five are registered among the twenty four who secured iterations in the *fasces* between 69 and 103. The curious will observe that none was followed by a consular son. The same holds for some other northern consuls such as Corellius Rufus (*suff.* 78) and Plinius Secundus (*suff.* 100).

VII. Epilogue. The poem of Statius is a useful historical document, perhaps in danger of being overvalued. A salutary observation intrudes. The posts held by Gallicus in his senatorial career happen to stand on

Gallicus; and on l. 72 he stated "maintenant il développe 72—93 le *cursus* de Rutilius". For the interpretation of lines 71—79 I am happy to acknowledge much benefit accruing from recent conversations with Professor F. R. D. Good-year and Dr. K. M. Coleman.

²⁵ CIL V 6969 (his dedication to Claudius Caesar in 49).

²⁶ PIR², G 183: "pater vel potius avus".

²⁷ Already divined by Groag (RE, Supp. III, 786), from the nomenclature of his slave Chloe (CIL VI 14740).

²⁸ Tacitus, Hist. 1,52,4; Dial. 8,1.

epigraphic attestation, each and all.²⁹ With the one exception, the city prefecture. Otherwise the novel information issuing from the poem is his ancestry.³⁰

The urban dignity passed into literature by another channel. Juvenal alludes to it in one of his latest poems:

*haec quota pars scelerum quae custos Gallicus urbis
usque a lucifero, donec lux occidat, audit?* (13,157f.).

Allusions of this kind call for careful treatment. When the satirist referred to the condemnation of Marius Priscus the proconsul of Africa (1,49f.), he was inspired by the classic letter of Pliny, not by a public transaction of the year 100. Nor does his Gallicus recall a Roman personage from the days of his youth. Juvenal had in mind the poem of Statius.

²⁹ Including the two priesthoods (ILS 5025; 9499). There is also his wife, Minicia L.f. Paetina (1008). Her family eludes ascertainment. The *nomen* is very common in Transpadana.

³⁰ One should however add the fact that Gallicus during his German command was able to capture Veleda (Silvae 1,4,90), the prophetess of the Bructeri.