

SALLUST'S WIFE

It would be worth knowing whom the historian married. His wife's name might disclose some local tie in the Sabine country; or it might permit a guess about alliances with families at the metropolis, whether ancient in repute or newly risen to influence. Marriage is a normal device for advancement — 'decus ac robur'. Cicero did well for himself when, about the year 79 B.C., he married Terentia. She was the half-sister of a Fabia, who was a Vestal Virgin. The Fabii are not only noble but patrician, albeit in temporary eclipse (no consul between 116 and 45).

Matrimony, adultery, or divorce, the vicissitudes that beset a public man furnish the occasion of talk, or material for an invective. Cicero in the sixtieth year of his life dismissed Terentia and not long after took to wife a young girl called Publilia, a wealthy ward who had been left in his respectable custody. The incident could not fail to be exploited in the literature hostile to Cicero's memory. As for Sallust, scandal brought up revelations about his behaviour, but purely extramarital. Malice or invention is silent about any similar discomfort in home and family.

There is a legend, it is true, about Sallust's selection of a wife. A father of the Church is the source, Jerome, in a work that draws on Seneca's treatise *De matrimonio*. He asserts that Cicero, divorcing Terentia, refused to marry the sister of Hirtius; but Terentia married again, first Sallust, Cicero's enemy, then Messalla Corvinus.¹ Now Terentia (it stands on independent record) reached an inordinate age, dying at 103.² Anything can happen in a long life, but hardly these two matrimonial ventures. Sallust (if 86 or 85 B.C. be accepted as the year of his birth) was perhaps only some eight or ten years younger than Cicero's Terentia. Messalla, however, was born in 64 B.C. His wives (two, at least) can be divined. First, a Calpurnia: she was his wife by 36 B.C., being the mother of Messallinus (*cos.* 3 B.C.). Next, an Aurelia: the mother of M. Aurelius Cotta Maximus, otherwise Cotta Messallinus (*cos.* A.D. 20).³

The notice in Jerome has generally been scouted. It is a fable, the product of invention or confusion — or both.⁴ How and why was it created?

Reading a few lines further on in Jerome one lights on an engaging example of the drawbacks of married life, namely what Cato the Censor had to suffer from Actoria Paulla, base-born, bibulous, and domineering. This female is a patent conflation. Cato in old age married a young girl, the daughter of his client Saloni-
us; and there was the aristocratic Aemilia Paulla, the wife of Cato's elder son (by Licinia).⁵ Seneca, the author of *De matrimonio*, may (or may not) have fallen

¹ Jerome, *Adv. Iovinianum* 1.48.

² Pliny *H.N.* 7. 158.

³ That is the standard view about the two marriages, cf. R. Hanslik, *RE* viii A, 134. Various uncertainties subsist, however.

⁴ Not but that Sallust's marriage has found believers: F. Meyer, *Caesars Monarchie und das Principat des Pompejus*³ (1922), p. 164; L. Pareti, *La congiura di Catilina* (1934), p. 204; S. Mazzarino, *Il pensiero*

storico classico II.i (1966), 392; II.ii, 17.

The matter is dismissed as 'ebenso schwer verifizierbar und zugleich unerheblich' by K. Büchner, *Sallust* (1960), p. 384.

⁵ Pliny, *H.N.* 7.61; Plutarch, *Cato* 20. For a more recent specimen of confusion see F. Miltner, *RE* xxii, 168. He assigns the Jerome passage to Cato's son and incorrectly prints it as 'habuit uxorem Aemiliam Paullam, humili loco natam', etc.

victim to some vulgar error or fable about Cato the Censor, who had become a figure of legend and fabrication. But Seneca must have been adequately informed about the pedigree of the Sallust family, being a friend of the eloquent and witty Passienus Crispus, the son by adoption of the historian's grand-nephew.⁶ Nor would he be in total ignorance about the age of Messalla Corvinus.

Terentia's successive marriages offer a paradoxical and suspicious contribution to the annals of Roman oratory. As Jerome subjoins in comment, 'quasi per quosdam gradus eloquentiae devoluta est'. That is the point, and confusion has intervened somewhere. As most have seen, there is a disquieting and instructive parallel. It concerns Cicero's wife. Not Terentia, however, but Publilia.

The story is related by Cassius Dio who, while failing to grasp the historical significance of certain characters in the reign of Tiberius, reproduces from one of the annalists a number of trivial anecdotes of the sort that Tacitus disdained. After a brief reference to the fate of M. Scribonius Libo, condemned for treason in A.D. 16, Dio goes on to say that Tiberius conceived no resentment against Vibius Rufus, who possessed and used the curule chair of Caesar the Dictator; and indeed, Rufus became consul. He adds that Rufus, as though to further his claims as an orator, had chosen a woman who had been the wife of Cicero.⁷ Dio does not supply her name. He could have recalled the existence of the orator's second wife, for he had used her (without the name) in an earlier part of his work, in the invective of Fufius Calenus against Cicero in 43 B.C.⁸

Vibius Rufus is manifestly the orator whose declamations are frequently cited by the elder Seneca; he was blamed by Cestius Pius, but praised by Asinius Pollio.⁹ Furthermore, he had an official existence as C. Vibius Rufus, consul suffect in A.D. 16; also president, a few years later, of the board of Tiber curators.¹⁰ Whether, as some assume, he had 'Rufinus' as *cognomen* in addition to 'Rufus' is another matter. One copy of the *Fasti*, the *Ostienses*, styles him 'C. Vibius Rufinus', it is true.¹¹ Is the item valid? There might be a lapicide's error, caused by the contagious proximity of 'Graecinus' in the nomenclature of his colleague, C. Pomponius Graecinus. Observe how the *Fasti Antiates* also go wrong. He there appears as 'C. Vibius Libo'.¹² That is to say, the *cognomen* of the *ordinarius*, L. Scribonius Libo, has been transferred to him. One can therefore have doubts about 'C. Vibius Rufus Rufinus'.¹³ However, the problem has further and complicated ramifications (they concern C. Vibius Rufinus, attested as consul suffect with M. Cocceius Nerva), and it is here irrelevant.¹⁴

Another item clamours for attention. The name of Publilia as the wife of C. Vibius Rufus happened to be discoverable on epigraphic record, though the fact has been ignored through a strange dereliction in scholarly inquiries. Tusculum reveals a certain M. Publilius Strato, freedman of Publilia and of C. Vibius Rufus.¹⁵

How and why Jerome called the lady 'Actoria Paulla' baffles curiosity ('Actorius' is a very rare nomen). One can see why Papiria, the mother of Scipio Africanus, is styled 'Maecia Papiria' (*Ep.* 108.1): contemporary Maecii in the Christian aristocracy.

⁶ Seneca, *N.Q.* 4, praef. 6.

⁷ Dio 57. 15. 6 f.

⁸ Dio 46. 18. 3 f.

⁹ *PIR*¹ V 396.

¹⁰ *ILS* 5925.

¹¹ *Inscr. It.* xiii.1, p. 185.

¹² *Inscr. It.* xiii.1, p. 303.

¹³ As the consul is registered by A. Degraffi, *I Fasti consolari* (1952), 8; R. Hanslik, *RE* viii A, 1979.

¹⁴ *CIL* vi. 1539; 9005 = *ILS* 1975. The colleague is to be presumed the jurist Nerva (cf. Groag in *PIR*² C 1225), hence the pair should go in 21 or 22. Some scholars raise dispute and put them c.40.

Vibius Rufinus can be identified as the Rufinus of *Ex Ponto* 1.3 and 3.4, cf. my *History in Ovid* (1978), Ch. V.

¹⁵ *CIL* xiv. 2556.

A satisfactory *terminus ante quem* is to hand. Another inscription shows a person called M. Publilius Strato making a dedication to the *Lares Augusti* in A.D. 33 along with C. Vibius Philippus and C. Cestius Primio.¹⁶ One is impelled to wonder whether Vibius Rufus in his passion for historic relics had not been able to lay hands on Cicero's Tusculan villa as well as the ex-wife Publilia (who can now be known as 'Publilia M. f.'). Another collector in a later age is the eloquent consular Silius Italicus, devout in his homage to the memory of Cicero and of Virgil.¹⁷ Duly mentioning the poet's funerary monument at Naples, Martial adds the fact that Silius had an estate once owned by the orator — 'iugera facundi qui Ciceronis habet'.¹⁸ Perhaps Cicero's *Cumanum*. The context precludes the famous *Tusculanum*, though the gravestone of one of Silius' slaves was found on the territory of Tusculum.¹⁹

To revert to Publilia. Married to Cicero in 46 B.C., she cannot have been born later than 60 B.C. The disparity in age with Vibius Rufus need not have been so enormous as at first sight it might appear. Lacking benefit of birth or military merit, Vibius Rufus probably came late to his consulship, and may then have been well past fifty, hence roughly coeval with Tiberius Caesar, who was born in the year of Philippi. Compare the fluent and ephemeral orator Q. Haterius, consul suffect in 5 B.C. He is said to have been nearly ninety when he died.²⁰ His decease falls in A.D. 26.²¹ That is, over sixty when he reached the *fasces*.

Publilia might have passed through several hands before she was annexed by Vibius Rufus. Chronology would not debar her from a brief partnership with Sallust, or with Messalla Corvinus.²² That is all that can be said — and perhaps it is more than enough.

As for Terentia, the confusion in Jerome's notice may be multiple, an 'inextricabilis error'. Was there ever any fact that promoted the fable? Sallust might have been married for a time to some woman called Terentia. Or again, the husband of a Terentia might be the other Sallustius Crispus. That is, his sister's grandson, whom the historian adopted.²³ It was easy and natural in late Antiquity to conflate the two (as happened with Pliny, uncle and nephew). Thus the scholiast's comment on the Ode which Horace addressed to Crispus.²⁴

The recent time exhibits a comparable piece of negligence. It concerns the *Horti Sallustiani*. The palace and gardens on the Esquiline were acquired by the historian, such is the standard assumption. It ignores or disallows the opulent grand-nephew, who, having changed sides at least once in the wars, emerged in profit and through favour of Caesar Augustus to become a minister of state, replacing Maecenas.

The assumption about the *Horti Sallustiani* can make appeal to ancient testimony, it is true. Nothing other than the invective *In Sallustium* of the Pseudo-Cicero. That product in the same sentence adds an engaging detail: Sallust had also got hold of Caesar's villa at Tibur.²⁵ And why not? His motives

¹⁶ *Eph. Ep.* 9, p.407, no. 679 = *AE* 1907, 78.

¹⁷ Pliny, *Ep.* 3. 7. 8.

¹⁸ Martial 11. 48. 2.

¹⁹ *CIL* xiv. 2653 = *ILS* 7339.

²⁰ Jerome, *Chron.* p. 172 H.

²¹ Tacitus, *Ann.* 4. 61.

²² Thus R. J. Rowland, *CW* 62 (1968), 134. He admits both marriages, with the

terms 'reasonable to think' and 'quite likely'.

²³ *Ann.* 3. 30. 1.

²⁴ Pseudo-Acro on 2.2: 'Sallustium Crispum adloquitur, historiographum, equitem Romanum, Augusti amicum.'

²⁵ *In Sallustium* 19: 'hortos pretiosissimos, villam Tiburti C. Caesaris, reliquas possessiones.'

were pure and honourable, he was impelled by devotion to the memory of his dead leader.²⁶

To observe the interactions of imposture and credulity is variously instructive in any age. Caesar's Tiburtine villa has no lodgement in history, only in the Pseudo-Cicero.²⁷

Such being the evidence about Sallust and about Sallust's Terentia, the matter might be left where it belongs. There are no facts. None the less, valid surmise may link Sallustius Crispus to a powerful group at the heart of affairs: Varro Murena, the ill-starred consul of 23 B.C. and his sister Terentia, who was married to Maecenas. According to Cassius Dio, Maecenas could not save Murena, neither could Proculeius, who was Murena's brother.²⁸

C. Proculeius (half-brother to Murena) was a person of note and consequence, an intimate friend of Caesar Augustus.²⁹ Now the Horatian ode, after discreet allusion to the wealth of Sallustius Crispus, passes at once to commendation of Proculeius,

vivet extento Proculeius aevo
notus in fratres animi paterni (ii. 2.5 f.).

The inference is easy that the two stood in some relation of kinship.³⁰

The name 'Proculeius' happens to be very rare.³¹ Brief attention may therefore go to 'L. Proculeius A. f.', magistrate at Perusia, of the Augustan period.³² Further, an aedile of early date, 'Proculeius P. f.' at Amiternum in the Sabine country.³³ That town is the *patria* of the historian Sallust.

Caution is prescribed, speculation deterred by missing names and buried links. First, the husband of Sallustia, the historian's sister. Second, the issue of the marriage: was it a son or a daughter? Third, the original *gentilicium* carried by the grandson of Sallustia.³⁴

One must renounce. It is enough to indicate milieu and habits. The problem announced as 'Sallust's wife' serves to set in sharp relief how little is known. A sombre and salutary consolation avails. No source save Tacitus discloses either the actions and role of Sallustius Crispus in dynastic politics or his relationship to the 'rerum Romanarum florentissimus auctor'.

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²⁶ K. Büchner, *Sallust* (1960), p.91: 'wohl aus Pietät', cf. p.398 (the same phrase).

²⁷ The disclaimer was perhaps influenced by the Tiburtinum of Metellus Scipio, which Antonius occupied (*Phil.* 5.19, cf. *Ad fam.* 12. 2. 1).

²⁸ Dio 54. 3. 5.

²⁹ *PIR*¹, P 736. He is disclosed as 'L.f.' by the coins he struck on the Ionian islands, cf. M. Grant, *FITA* (1946), 66 f.

³⁰ Thus, cursorily, in *Sallust* (1964), 277.

³¹ 'Proculeius' is registered, but with no specimens, in Schulze, *LE* 458. In *CIL* ix-xi

it occurs on three inscriptions only, in each volume: one in xiv, none in v.

³² *CIL* xi.1943 = *ILS* 6617: 'L. Proculeius A.f./Titia gnatus/III vir, II vir.'

³³ *CIL* ix. 4205 = i² 1857 = *ILLRP* 530. Amiternum has also the gravestone of 'Proculeia P. f.' (ix. 4289).

³⁴ Compare the grandson of Ummidia Quadratilla (Pliny, *Ep.* 7.24.2). Patently C. Ummidius Quadratus (*suff.* 118), but he must have possessed another gentilicium, that of his father. Therefore a polyonymus, but there is no need to postulate an adoption.