

THE DATE OF MESSALLA'S DEATH

In a characteristically provocative judgement Sir Ronald Syme has declared: 'It is not easy to go against a document. Nevertheless, the worse posture is obduracy against the testimony of a precise and lucid writer'.¹ The writer is Ovid, the document one employed by Frontinus, and the context, the death-date of Messalla Corvinus, a subject of scholarly dispute since Scaliger's day.² Largely on the basis of two passages in Ovid (*Trist.* 4. 4. 25 ff.; *Pont.* 1. 7. 29 f.), Syme rejects the apparent testimony of Frontinus (*Aq.* 102) and Jerome (*Chron.* p. 170 H) that Messalla died in A.D. 12 or 13, in favour of a date in A.D. 8, before Ovid's departure for exile. Issues beyond the death-date of Messalla are involved. Thus Syme wishes, as a corollary, to ante-date the year of Livy's death by five years from A.D. 17 to A.D. 12.³ Further, Syme's characterization of Ovid as 'a precise and lucid writer' seems to have more general implications.⁴ His arguments merit close scrutiny.⁵

His first point is derived from a passage in a poem written in A.D. 11,⁶ almost certainly for Messalla's son Messallinus:⁷

quo vereare minus ne sim tibi crimen amicus,
 invidiam, siqua est, auctor habere potest.
 nam tuus est primis cultus mihi semper ab annis
 (hoc certe noli dissimulare) pater,
 ingeniumque meum (potes hoc meminisse) probabat
 plus etiam quam me iudice dignus eram;
 deque meis illo referebat versibus ore,
 in quo pars magna nobilitatis erat.

(*Trist.* 4. 4. 25–32)

Syme comments: 'Corvinus, it should seem, is no longer among the living: one observes the tone, and the tenses ('probabat', 'referebat', 'erat')'.⁸ This is unconvincing. The imperfects 'probabat' and 'referebat' are perfectly appropriate, given that the context is Ovid's early connection with Messalla, as 'primis cultus... ab annis' and 'potes hoc meminisse' make clear. 'Erat' in conjunction with the other imperfects need cause little concern; Ovid may merely be recalling the impression that Messalla's oratorical powers made on him in those early years. It is possible, however, to see here

¹ *History in Ovid* (Oxford, 1978), p. 125.

² The early views were summarized in E. W. Fischer, *Römische Zeittafeln, von Roms Gründung bis auf Augustus' Tod* (Altona, 1846), pp. 444 ff. More recent bibliographical material is discussed in J. Hammer, *Prolegomena to an Edition of the Panegyricus Messallae* (New York, 1926), pp. 5 ff.; R. Hanslik, *RE* 8A, 135 ff.; A. Valvo, *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* ii. 30. 3. 1663 ff.

³ *History in Ovid*, pp. 109 f., 123 f.; 'Livy and Augustus', *HSPh* 64 (1959), 41 (= *Roman Papers* [Oxford, 1978], p. 415). T. J. Luce, *TAPA* 96 (1965), 231 n. 61, rejects Syme's dating of Livy's death, though he accepts the earlier date for Messalla's.

⁴ *History in Ovid* begins with the statement 'The poems of Ovid offer the historian much more than he might expect'. Syme is eloquent, however, about the pitfalls; see especially pp. 16 ff. On p. 126, in connection with the information about Ovid's downfall in *Pont.* 2. 3. 61 ff., he observes, 'Now, however, the poet comes closer to precision than is his wont'.

⁵ Syme has promised (*ibid.* p. 125, n. 1) to present his arguments more fully in a forthcoming work, *The Augustan Aristocracy*.

⁶ G. Luck, *P. Ovidius Naso: Tristia*, II (Heidelberg, 1977), p. 8; Syme, *History in Ovid*, p. 38.

⁷ See Luck, *op. cit.* p. 247; Syme, *History in Ovid*, p. 122.

⁸ *Ibid.*

a suggestion that Messalla's eloquence was a thing of the past; see further Plin. *HN* 7, 90; Jerome, *Chron.* p. 170 H (quoted below). The tone seen by Syme in the passage is surely largely derived from the tenses and thus needs no further explanation. The passage certainly need not mean that Messalla was dead in A.D. 11.

Two poems of *Epistulae ex Ponto*, however, (*Pont.* 1. 7; 2. 2) clearly refer to Messalla as dead. In *Pont.* 2. 2. 97 f. Ovid invokes the memory of the father's generosity to influence the son Messallinus to help him:

hoc pater ille tuus primo mihi cultus ab aevo,
si quid habet sensus umbra diserta, petit.⁹

Syme comments misleadingly, 'The date of 13... must be discarded. Corvinus was only an 'umbra' on October 23 of the previous year (*Ex P.* 2. 2. 98).¹⁰ The poem does refer (vv. 75–92) to Tiberius' Pannonian triumph of that date,¹¹ but it cannot be inferred that Messalla was already dead merely because he is not mentioned as participating in the procession. Certainly he was an *umbra* when the poem was composed, but this was probably in the spring of 13.¹² The first three books of *Epistulae ex Ponto* were written, it is generally accepted, during the years A.D. 12 and 13 and published together in 13.¹³ Ovid himself declares (*Pont.* 3. 9. 53) of these poems, 'postmodo collectas utcumque sine ordine iunxi'. This is no doubt disingenuous¹⁴ and Syme is not deterred from discerning a rough chronological order in the arrangement. Thus he dates *Pont.* 1. 7 to the year 12, on the grounds that 'no poem in *Ex Ponto*, Book I, alludes to the Pannonian triumph of October 23'.¹⁵ However, his argument is nullified by *Pont.* 1. 2. 26, 'quarta fatigat hiems', a reference to the winter of A.D. 12–13.¹⁶

Vv. 17–34 of *Pont.* 1. 7, a poem also addressed to Messallinus, run:

me miserum, si tu verbis offenderis istis
nosque negas ulla parte fuisse tuos!
idque sit ut verum, mentito ignoscere debes:
nil demit laudi gloria nostra tuae. 20
quis se Caesaribus notus non fingit amicum?
da veniam fasso: tu mihi Caesar eras.
nec tamen inrumpo quo non licet ire, satisque est
atria si nobis non patuisse negas.
utque tibi fuerit mecum nihil amplius, uno 25

⁹ For an attempt to use these lines in support of the view that Messalla died after Ovid's departure from Rome, see R. L. Jeffreys, 'A 'Faux-Pas' by Ovid and the Date of Messalla's Death', in *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History*, 1, ed. C. Deroux, Collection *Latomus* 164 (Brussels, 1979), 373 ff.

¹⁰ *History in Ovid*, p. 125.

¹¹ The date is indicated in the fragment of the *Fasti Praenestini* found in 1921; see G. Wissowa, *Hermes* 58 (1923), 169 ff.

¹² As Syme acknowledges (*History in Ovid*, p. 125). Ovid's excuses for the tardy arrival in Rome of his poem on the triumph (*Pont.* 2. 1) also apply to *Pont.* 2. 2. 75 ff.; he waited for a friend's account (*Pont.* 3. 4. 42) and communications were slow (*ibid.* vv. 59–60). The suggestion of H. B. Evans, *Hermes* 104 (1976), 111, that the poem was composed around the same time as *Trist.* 4. 4 is invalidated by the mention of Tiberius' triumph.

¹³ Cf. Syme (*History in Ovid*, p. 42); J. Barsby, *Ovid, Greece and Rome New Surveys in the Classics*, 12 (Oxford, 1978), p. 46 n. 5.

¹⁴ H. H. Frösch, *Ovids Epistulae ex Ponto I–III als Gedichtsammlung* (Diss. Bonn, 1968), pp. 127 ff. demonstrates a roughly symmetrical arrangement according to addressee.

¹⁵ *History in Ovid*, p. 122.

¹⁶ Syme himself notes this passage on an earlier page (*ibid.* p. 40).

nempe salutaris, quam prius, ore minus.
 nec tuus est genitor nos infitatus amicos,
 hortator studii causaque faxque mei:
 cui nos et lacrimas, supremum in funere munus,
 et dedimus medio scripta canenda foro. 30
 adde quod est frater, tanto tibi iunctus amore,
 quantus in Atridis Tyndaridisque fuit:
 is me nec comitem nec dedignatus amicum est:
 si tamen haec illi non nocitura putas.

Vv. 29–30 are the main basis of the argument put forward by those who believe that Messalla died before Ovid went into exile in A.D. 8. Syme's interpretation is typical; 'Ovid had not only been among the mourners at the funeral of Messalla Corvinus. He composed a dirge.'¹⁷

These lines certainly present a challenge to those who argue that Messalla died later. O. Gruppe had an easy solution – expunge the lines as an interpolation!¹⁸ However, such desperate measures are uncalled for. In a careful examination of the lines in the light of their context, F. Marx¹⁹ showed that it is not only unnecessary but also undesirable to interpret them in the manner advocated by Syme.

In the first place, the word-order shows that 'supremum in funere munus' is to be taken in apposition to 'lacrimas'.²⁰ These tears of grief for the dead might equally well be shed at Tomis, as at an actual funeral in Rome.

Line 30 is more difficult. 'Medio... foro' indicates the location of the funeral of a man of Messalla's standing,²¹ and funeral dirges or *neniae* were sometimes sung at the funerals of prominent men.²² Ovid can scarcely have sent a dirge for the actual funeral from exile (the funeral would be over long before the poem arrived) – unless we are prepared to believe that Ovid, knowing Messalla to be in bad health, had, as it were, composed an obituary in advance;²³ i.e. sent a poem to his wife to be offered as a funeral tribute when the great man finally passed away. But 'dedimus... scripta canenda' need not mean that the poem was recited at the funeral. Indeed, we may with Marx²⁴ interpret the line to mean that Ovid composed a poem possessing the character of a funeral tribute,²⁵ though not intended for recitation at the ceremony itself.²⁶ The ambiguity of the language in vv. 29–30 will be deliberate. Ovid wishes to suggest his closeness to Messalla in death as in life; emotionally (even if retrospectively) he participated in the funeral. There will be a hint here of the motif whereby the exiled

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 123.

¹⁸ *Quaestiones Annaeanae* (Stettin, 1873), pp. 33 ff.

¹⁹ 'Das Todesjahr des Redners Messalla', *Wien. Stud.* 19 (1897), 150 ff.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 153.

²¹ Cf. J. M. C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (London, 1971), p. 47; F. Vollmer, 'De funere publico Romano', *JKPh Suppl.* 18 (1893), 321 ff.

²² For discussion of the *nenia* see *RE* 16, 2392 (W. Kroll); J. L. Heller, *TAPA* 74 (1943), 215 ff.; W. Kierdorf, *Laudatio funebris* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1980), pp. 96 ff.

²³ Such prefabrication would have been risky; cf. the poem and fate of C. Lutorius Priscus (Tac. *Ann.* 3. 49).

²⁴ Op. cit. p. 152.

²⁵ Marx (ibid.) believes that the poem was a literary *nenia*, but there is no real evidence that such a genre developed; see sources cited in n. 22 above. If the poem was not for the actual funeral it seems more probable that it was an elegy; surviving instances of funeral elegies by Ovid are *Am.* 3, 9 (for Tibullus) and *Pont.* 1, 9 (for Celsus).

²⁶ One need not exclude the idea that Ovid hoped his poem might be recited publicly in the forum on some subsequent occasion. Horace bears sardonic witness to poetry-reading in the forum in words that bear resemblance to Ovid's, 'in medio qui | scripta foro recitent, sunt multi' (Hor. *Sat.* 1. 4. 74 ff.).

Ovid mentally travels to Rome and takes part in ceremonies such as triumphs (*Trist.* 4. 2) or consular inaugurations (*Pont.* 4. 4; 4. 9).²⁷ Though this may not be the obvious interpretation to the general reader, the poet's meaning would have been perfectly clear to Messallinus, if he was aware that Ovid had been unable to attend the funeral, but had sent his tribute from Tomis. Marx has furnished some excellent reasons for believing that this was in fact the case.

As Syme indicates,²⁸ Marx argued that v. 23 'nec tuus est genitor nos infitatus amicos' must refer to the situation after Ovid's disgrace in A.D. 8. Syme objects, 'Yet the statement may not be specific but general, referring to Corvinus' attitude through the long years of friendship: the next line acclaims him as the inspirer of Ovid's poetical genius.'²⁸ This does less than justice to Marx's discussion.

In many passages in the poems from exile Ovid returns to the matter of the loyalty and disloyalty of friends after his disgrace. Thus for instance, in a poem addressed to Messalla's younger son Cotta Maximus, he declares (*Pont.* 2. 3. 29 f.) 'cumque alii nolint etiam me nosse videri | vix duo proiecto tresve tulistis opem'. In a poem to his wife he uses the same word as in the line under discussion; she remained loyal 'cum magna meorum | notitiam pars est *infitata* mei' (*Pont.* 4. 6. 39 f.).

In our passage it is clear from the context that Ovid is concerned with the loyalty of Messalla's family at this time of crisis. He fears that Messallinus may deny that Ovid ever had any connection with him; as Marx observes,³⁰ 'negas' of vv. 18 and 24 is equivalent to 'est infitatus' of v. 27. To encourage Messallinus to acknowledge the friendship he refers not only to the father but in very similar terms to the loyalty of Messallinus' brother Cotta; 'is me comitem nec dedignatus amicum' (v. 33). Here Marx weakens his argument by strongly insisting that v. 33 refers to a time long before Ovid's disgrace when the poet was a *comes* and *amicus* of Cotta. His reason seems to be the use of the past tense 'dedignatus...est' in contrast to 'negas' of vv. 18, 24. He explains the past 'est infitatus' by the fact that Messalla is dead. However, the point of the past tenses is surely that whereas Cotta (like Messalla) made his attitude clear soon after Ovid's disgrace (cf. e.g. *Pont.* 2. 3. 28-9), Messallinus' attitude is still unclear. Perhaps it might be argued that Messalla's death came after Ovid's disgrace, but before his departure from Italy in December (*Trist.* 1. 11. 3). One would have to assume that in this relatively brief period³¹ there was time for Messalla to stand by Ovid and then die and for the poet to compose and deliver his funeral tribute. This implausible scenario is impossible, however. Messalla would have been incapable of supporting or condemning Ovid in the last months of his life, for he had lost his powers of speech and intellect. Pliny (*HN* 7. 90) uses Messalla as an example of the fragility of man's memory: 'cepit oblivionem...sui vero nominis Messalla Corvinus orator'. Jerome (*Chron.* p. 170 H) elaborates:

Messalla Corvinus orator ante biennium quam moreretur ita memoriam ac sensum amisit, ut vix pauca verba coniungeret, et ad extremum ulcere sibi circa sacram spinam nato inedia se confecit anno aetatis LXXII.

In connection with the above passage Jerome also provides information about the date of Messalla's death, but his testimony is bedevilled by discrepancies amongst the MSS, problems of interpretation and doubts about his accuracy.³² The oldest MS, *O*,

²⁷ See B. R. Nagle, *The Poetics of Exile*, Collection *Latomus* 170 (Brussels, 1980), pp. 96 ff.

²⁸ *History in Ovid*, p. 123, n. 2.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Op. cit.* p. 154.

³¹ For the chronology, see J. C. Thibault, *The Mystery of Ovid's Exile* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1964), pp. 11 ff.

³² On the general unreliability of Jerome, see R. Helm, 'Hieronymus' Zusätze in Eusebius' *Chronik* und ihr Wert für die Literaturgeschichte', *Philologus*, Suppl. 21, 2 (1929), 1 ff.

and some lesser MSS assign the note to A.D. 12, while *A*, *B* and *M* put it under A.D. 11.³³ The length of life, given by most MSS as 72, is 82 according to *O* and 77 in *F*. It is not clear besides whether Jerome intends to indicate the year when Messalla lost his faculties or when he died.³⁴ Again, does 'biennium' mean two full years or is it less precise? Various combinations of the above possibilities would mean that Jerome intended a death date as early as A.D. 11 or as late as A.D. 14 (when Messalla was certainly dead).

Earlier, under the year 59 B.C., Jerome has 'Messalla Corvinus orator nascitur'; however, as Syme observes, this 'is patently too late'.³⁵ If born in 59 B.C. Messalla would surely have been too young to have prosecuted Aufidia in 44 B.C., to have earned Cicero's lavish praise in 43 B.C., to have become consul in 31 B.C. and above all to have taken a leading role at Philippi.³⁶ H. Schulz supported Borghesi's suggestion that Messalla was born in 64 B.C., by supposing confusion between the consuls of 59 B.C., Caesar and Bibulus, and those of 64 B.C., Caesar and Figulus; as a corollary, he set the date of death in A.D. 8, thus retaining a life-span of 72 years.³⁷ Syme accepts these dates: 'Jerome can be dealt with, painlessly'.³⁸

Helm goes further and abandons Jerome completely.³⁹ He argues that Messalla died between 15 and 1 B.C., on the basis of a passage in Tac. *Dial.* 17 transmitted in the MSS as 'nam Corvinus in medium usque Augusti principatum, Asinius paene ad extremum duravit'. The passage is as embarrassing to those who believe that Messalla died in A.D. 8 as to the advocates of A.D. 12 or 13. Syme makes no mention of it. If 'medium' is interpreted with some precision, it suggests a death in the period around 10 to 4 B.C. This, however, is impossibly early, for, in spite of Helm's doubts, Corvinus was surely the Valerius Messalla who saluted Augustus as 'pater patriae' in 2 B.C. (Suet. *Aug.* 58).⁴⁰ Even if it is assumed that Messalla suffered his stroke immediately after the salutation we still have to allow for Jerome's *biennium* of incapacity before death. Since Asinius Pollio died in A.D. 4 or 5,⁴¹ Tacitus' ascription of the two men's deaths to different periods of the principate would be quite inappropriate. Besides, the Tacitus passage seems to contradict Frontinus as well as Jerome. Since a slip on Tacitus' part is here unlikely,⁴² textual corruption is generally assumed; transposition of the names 'Corvinus' and 'Asinius' is usually favoured.⁴³ If this is accepted,⁴⁴ the

³³ For Jerome's MSS, see now A. A. Mosshammer, *RhM* 24 (1981), 66 ff. For discussion of the readings in our present passage see Helm, *Philologus*, Suppl. 21, 2 (1929), 47 ff.; R. Hanslik, *RE* 8A, 136.

³⁴ Marx (op. cit. p. 150) argues that the date refers to the loss of faculties, Helm (*Philologus*, Suppl. 21, 2 [1929], 49) that it refers to Messalla's death.

³⁵ *History in Ovid*, p. 123.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 109; Hammer, op. cit. pp. 5 ff.; Helm, *Philologus*, Suppl. 21, 2 (1929), 47.

³⁷ *De Valerii Messallae aetate* (Stettin, 1886), pp. 6 ff.

³⁸ *History in Ovid*, p. 125; cf. pp. 109 f., 124; *Roman Papers*, pp. 414 f.; cf. Hammer, op. cit. p. 10.

³⁹ *Philologus*, Suppl. 21, 2 (1929), 51. Helm believes that Messalla was not much younger than Brutus (born 85 B.C.), but see n. 56 below.

⁴⁰ As Hanslik observes (*RE* 8A, 136), the exact quotation of the words used by Messalla probably comes from the memoirs cited by Suetonius in *Aug.* 74. Besides, 'Valerius Messalla' without further identification surely means Corvinus as in *Aug.* 74; cf. Hammer, op. cit. p. 88, n. 370.

⁴¹ See *RE* 2, 1592; *OCD*², p. 852.

⁴² For Tacitus' keen interest in Corvinus and his sons, see Syme, *History in Ovid*, pp. 131 ff.

⁴³ First suggested by B. Borghesi (*Oeuvres complètes*, 1 [Paris, 1862], 410) and accepted in Köstermann's Teubner (Leipzig, 1938), by Hanslik (*RE* 8A, 136) and by R. Güngerich (*Kommentar zum Dialogus des Tacitus* [Göttingen, 1980], p. 72). However, M. Winterbottom in *Corneli Taciti Opera Minora* (Oxford, 1975) retains the order of the MSS.

⁴⁴ 'Medium' does not seem very apt for Asinius; presumably the word is used, as Güngerich (loc. cit.) suggests, in the freer sense indicated in *TLL* 8, 584-6. For other attempts (none convincing) to emend or explain the text, see Hammer, op. cit. p. 7.

emended text would support Jerome's dating of Messalla's death rather than A.D. 8, for the latter would again place the deaths of the two men too close together.

Helm and Syme⁴⁵ are of course right to point out the dangers of excessive reliance on the unconfirmed entries of Jerome. However, the information about Messalla's final illness is more detailed than in the case of the erroneous birth-date of 59 B.C. The very oddness of the information suggests that Jerome may have paid sufficient attention to transmit accurately a date attached to the material in the source.⁴⁶ In addition we do have strong independent testimony that Messalla died about the time indicated by Jerome.

We come to Frontinus, 'a conscientious administrator',⁴⁷ whose book on aqueducts includes discussion of the role and functions of his new post as *curator aquarum*. In seeking information about the activities of his predecessors he clearly made use of the archives of the curatorship.⁴⁸ He naturally displayed an interest in the foundation of the position by Augustus in 11 B.C., when Messalla was made the first *curator*:

Augustus . . . rei continendae exercendaeque curatorem fecit Messallam Corvinum, cui adiutores dati Postumius Sulpicius praetorius et Lucius Cominius pedarius.

(Front. *Aq.* 99)

Frontinus adds that Messalla was succeeded in the position in A.D. 13:

cum perduxerimus rem ad initium curatorum, non est alienum subiungere qui post Messallam huic officio ad nos usque praeferint.

Messallae successit Planco et Silio cos. Ateius Capito.

Syme⁴⁹ offers alternative explanations of Frontinus' inconvenient testimony. First he gives B. Borghesi's view⁵⁰ that the position of *curator aquarum* was left vacant from A.D. 8 to 13, the duties being carried on by the *adiutores* mentioned by Frontinus (*Aq.* 99). It is probable that Sulpicius and Cominius administered the office during Messalla's final illness, and not impossible that they continued to do so for a brief period until a successor was appointed. However, a five-year period without a holder of this important consular position, after its prestige had been established by the tenure of a man of Messalla's stature, seems out of the question.

Alternatively Syme suggests corruption in the text of Frontinus; 'perhaps the order is incorrect, or the name of a *curator* (from 8 to 13) may have fallen out'. Robert Rodgers supports the latter idea.⁵¹ Indeed he believes that there are other undetected lacunae in Frontinus' list; in particular, that the name of a *curator* has dropped out between M. Porcius Cato and A. Didius Gallus and that a number of *curatores* may have been lost between Acilius Aviola and Frontinus himself.

According to the text of Frontinus, Didius' curatorship lasted from A.D. 38 to 49, but there are two problems. In the first place, though the curatorship was a consular post, Didius did not become suffect consul until 39.⁵² Secondly we find Didius in charge

⁴⁵ Cf. *Roman Papers*, p. 414.

⁴⁶ Perhaps Suetonius' *De viris illustribus*, but on Jerome's sources see R. Helm, *RhM* 76 (1927), 138–70, 254–306.

⁴⁷ Syme, *History in Ovid*, p. 124.

⁴⁸ For Frontinus' sources, see P. Grimal, *Frontin: les aqueducs de la ville de Rome* (Paris, 1961), x ff.

⁴⁹ Syme, *History in Ovid*, p. 124.

⁵⁰ Op. cit. i. 408 ff.

⁵¹ R. H. Rodgers, 'Curatores Aquarum', *HSCPh* 86 (1982), 171 ff. It had earlier been put forward by Helm, *Philologus*, Suppl. 21, 2 (1929), 50. Helm and Rodgers note that one will have to assume not only the omission of the *curator*'s name, but also of the two consuls of the year in which he assumed office.

⁵² *AE* 1973, 138.

of a Roman force in the Bosporus around 45–46 (Tac. *Ann.* 12. 15. 1). Rodgers therefore argues that Didius was made *curator* about 47. If with Rodgers we discount the idea that the material relating to Didius should be divided between a father and a son,⁵³ other explanations of each difficulty present themselves. Didius' predecessor in Frontinus' list was M. Porcius Cato, who held office for only a brief period in 38; the circumstances of his appointment and departure are obscure.⁵⁴ In an emergency Gaius may have ignored constitutional niceties⁵⁵ or given Didius (perhaps already an *adiutor*) temporary charge of the water-supply and then confirmed him as *curator* after his consulship. Again, if Tiberius could take a *curator aquarum* away from Rome for seven years⁵⁶ and if the precedent had been established that a *curator* could simultaneously hold another public office,⁵⁷ there seems no reason in principle why Claudius should not have made Didius legate of Moesia.⁵⁸ Claudius' personal interest in the construction of two great new aqueducts⁵⁹ may have led him to find other employment for his *curator aquarum*.⁶⁰

Our text of Frontinus has Acilius' curatorship last from A.D. 74 until 97, when Frontinus succeeded him. However, Rodgers points to epigraphical evidence that requires that three men be seriously considered as possible *curatores*:⁶¹ L. Funisulanus Vettonianus (suffect cos. in 78); C. Laecanius Bassus Caecina Paetus (suffect cos. in ?71); M. Arrecinus Clemens (perhaps the suffect cos. of 73 and suffect II in ?85).⁶²

Funisulanus is termed *curator aquarum* in *CIL* xi. 571, but the reference may be to a praetorian position as *adiutor*⁶³ or else he may have been chief *curator* after Frontinus.⁶⁴ The evidence for the other two men comes from imperial lead pipes of Domitian's reign: 'sub cura M. Arricini Clementis' (*CIL* xv. 7278); 'sub cura Caef[cin(ae)] Paeti et Articulei Paeti et Nini Hastae', with Domitian styled *Germanicus* (*CIL* xv. 7281 a). Rodgers suggests⁶⁵ that both Arrecinus Clemens and Caecina Paetus may have been chief *curatores*, with Articuleius Paetus and Ninnius Hasta being Caecina's *adiutores*.

It was not, however, normal practice for the name of the *curator* to appear on

⁵³ This was put forward, with different divisions of material, by A. v. Domaszewski, *Röm. Mitt.* 6 (1891), 163 ff. and L. Cantarelli, *BCAR* 29 (1901), 194 ff. Groag (*RE* 5, 411; *PIR*² D 70), as well as Rodgers (op. cit. pp. 174–5), rejects the idea. Didius was 'senectute gravis' around A.D. 52 (Tac. *Ann.* 12. 40. 5), but is unlikely to have been old enough to have a son consul in 39.

⁵⁴ *RE* 22, 218 f.

⁵⁵ Cf. L. Vidman, *LF* 96 (1973), 16 ff.

⁵⁶ M. Cocceius Nerva (Tac. *Ann.* 4. 58. 1; 6. 26. 1).

⁵⁷ C. Ateius Capito, a *curator alvei Tiberis* from A.D. 15 (Tac. *Ann.* 1. 76. 3).

⁵⁸ Rodgers (op. cit. p. 74 n. 15) too easily dismisses the relevance of these precedents and of certain or possible parallels from later reigns for *curatores*' simultaneous tenure of other offices. Under Nero Calpurnius Piso was appointed to a board of consulars in charge of *vectigalia publica* (Tac. *Ann.* 15. 18). Rodgers is ready to accept that Frontinus retained his *cura* during his second consulship of 98 and perhaps during his third consulship of 100. It remains possible that Vibius Crispus' governorship of Africa overlapped with his tenure of the curatorship (A.D. 68–71).

⁵⁹ Plin. *HN* 36. 122–3; Frontin. *Aq.* 13. 1; Suet. *Claud.* 20; Tac. *Ann.* 11. 13.

⁶⁰ After the dedication of the Aqua Claudia and the Anio Novus in A.D. 52, Claudius lessened the importance of the curatorship by assigning some of his duties to a freedman *procurator* (Frontin. *Aq.* 105). This may have institutionalized a role already played by imperial freedmen during the construction period.

⁶¹ Op. cit. pp. 177–80.

⁶² But see n. 72 below.

⁶³ Groag (*RE* 7, 303; *PIR*² F 570). *Adiutores* are termed *curatores* in *CIL* vi, 1248.

⁶⁴ T. Ashby, *The Aqueducts of Ancient Rome* (Oxford, 1935), p. 20, and the authors cited in *RE* 7, 303 (Borghesi; Dressel; Cantarelli; Hirschfeld).

⁶⁵ Op. cit. pp. 178 f.

imperial and public pipes. As Dressel demonstrates,⁶⁶ the usual format had the name of the imperial *procurator*,⁶⁷ identified as such, following *sub cura*. We have only one late instance⁶⁸ where a man is identified as *curator* in this formula. Officials other than *procuratores* and *curatores* appear: on one pipe (*CIL* xv. 7326) the consul of A.D. 196 appears together with the *procurator*; on another (*CIL* xv. 7282) Entellus, Domitian's secretary *a libellis* (not identified as such), is mentioned with the *procurator*.

There are in addition seven pipes where *sub cura* is followed by the names of men without any indication of office. To judge from the nomenclature, the name on one pipe (*CIL* xv. 7315) may be that of a *procurator*, while the others are of well born Romans. None of the latter is of a known *curator*.⁶⁹ If the two names on *CIL* xv. 7302, 'sub cura Sili Deciani et Memni Rufi', are those of *curatores*, they would seem more likely to be those of *adiutores* rather than of a chief *curator* and only one *adiutor*. It is usually supposed⁷⁰ that the four remaining pipes with one name also refer to *adiutores*. This requires the assumption that Arrecinus Clemens (*CIL* xv. 7278) was a consular *adiutor*⁷¹ or that the reference is to a son or other close relative of the Arrecinus of *PIR*² A 1072.⁷² The three men listed on *CIL* xv. 7281a present a more serious problem; as Rodgers observes,⁷³ this does recall the three-man board of *curatores aquarum*. Groag suggested⁷⁴ that with an aged Acilius Aviola as *curator* Domitian may have taken the unusual measure of assisting him with three *adiutores*, one of whom (Caecina Paetus) was consular. In fact it is possible that the three men were all consular: Q. Articuleius Paeta may be suffect consul of 78 and not the *ordinarius* of 101;⁷⁵ Ninnius Hasta may be *suffectus* of 88 and not the *ordinarius* of 114.⁷⁶ This is the view of B. W. Jones, who suggests that Domitian may have appointed senior senators to supplement or replace the usual *adiutores*, perhaps for improved efficiency but 'possibly so as to counteract the opposition that his generosity to the equestrian class had aroused among senators'.⁷⁷ A. Passerini⁷⁸ thinks that Domitian created an important new *officium* in connection with the distribution of water.

It is true that much of the above reasoning rests on the assumption that Frontinus' list is correct and complete. On the other hand our knowledge seems too inadequate and the situation too confused to insist on a lacuna. Besides, how long would such a lacuna be? Rodgers feels that Vespasian is unlikely to have abandoned a pattern of appointments lasting one to two years⁷⁹ and can envisage under Domitian a series of curatorships in close succession: for Caecina Paetus, c. 83–84; for Arrecinus

⁶⁶ *CIL* xv, pp. 907 ff.

⁶⁷ Usually but not always *procurator aquarum*; see Dressel, *CIL* xv, pp. 908 f.

⁶⁸ *CIL* xv, 7326.

⁶⁹ Lists in *RE* 4, 1786 (Kornemann); Ashby, op. cit. pp. 17–23.

⁷⁰ See Dressel, *CIL* xv, p. 909 (following Lanciani); Kornemann, *RE* 4, 1787; Ashby, op. cit. p. 23.

⁷¹ The original *adiutores* had been a *praetorius* and *pedarius* (Front. *Aq.* 99. 4). The only other men known to be *adiutores*, T. Rubrius Nepos and M. Cornelius Firmus, the colleagues of A. Didius, (*CIL* vi, 1248) were not consular.

⁷² R. Wiegels, *Gnomon* 46 (1974), 193; B. W. Jones, *Domitian and the Senatorial Order* (Philadelphia, 1979), p. 66.

⁷³ Op. cit. p. 179.

⁷⁴ *RE Supp.* 1, 268.

⁷⁵ Thus Groag, *PIR*² A 1176; Jones, op. cit. p. 65. Dressel (*CIL* xv, 7281a) and Rodgers (op. cit. p. 179 n. 40) prefer the *ordinarius* of 101.

⁷⁶ For the suffect of 88 see *RE* 17, 633 (Groag); *Suppl.* 14, 286 (Eck); Jones, op. cit. pp. 65, 72, 113. Dressel (*CIL* xv, 7281a) and Rodgers (op. cit. p. 179 n. 40) again prefer the later consul.

⁷⁷ Op. cit. p. 66.

⁷⁸ 'M. Arrecino Clemente', *Athenaeum* 18 (1940), 162.

⁷⁹ Op. cit. p. 177.

Clemens in the mid 80s⁸⁰ and for Funisulanus Vettonianus in the late 80s.⁸¹ This would mean that at least five names have dropped out and more than double this number if short-term appointments were the rule throughout the Flavian period. A gap of this order is surely unlikely.

Even if there were a lacuna after Aviola it would not of course mean that there was one after Messalla. The readiness to assume such a gap in Frontinus recalls Gruppe's suggestion that *Pont.* 1. 7. 29–30 is an interpolation.

Syme concludes his discussion of the death date of Messalla with two questions:

First, if the decease of Messalla Corvinus occurred after Ovid went away in relegation, how could a poem be despatched from Tomis in time to be recited at the obsequies? Second, if Corvinus died in 13, why does no poem of that year console the sons for a recent bereavement?⁸²

The first question reveals that Syme has not taken into account Marx's explanation of *Pont.* 1. 7. 30, 'dedimus medio scripta canenda foro'. The answer to the second question is that a poem will have been sent, the poem referred to in the line just quoted.⁸³

In all probability Messalla died late in A.D. 12 or early in 13.⁸⁴ In the former case there would be less need to be concerned about the dates of the two Pontic epistles to Messallinus; on the other hand we would have to assume a continuation of the administration of the aqueducts through the *adiutores* for a few months after Messalla's death.⁸⁵ In any case, we should surely prefer the testimony of Frontinus' document, independently confirmed by Jerome, to the ambiguities of *Pont.* 1. 7 and *Trist.* 4. 4.⁸⁶

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⁸⁰ Op. cit. p. 180. He ignores the fact that on *CIL* xv, 7278 Domitian is not styled Germanicus.

⁸¹ Op. cit. p. 178.

⁸² *History in Ovid*, p. 125.

⁸³ There is little more reason to expect the inclusion of such a tribute to Messalla in *Epistulae ex Ponto* than that of the poem on the death and apotheosis of Augustus referred to in *Pont.* 4. 5. 17; 4. 9. 13. Besides, the disgraced poet's poem on Messalla might not have been well received by the family.

⁸⁴ Hanslik (*RE* 8A, 136), who opts for A.D. 13, reads 'LXXVII' with *F* in Jerome, *Chron.* p. 170 H, so as to accord with a birth-year of 64 B.C. However, 'LXXII' may well be the right reading but based on the mistaken birth-year of 59 B.C. It remains probable that Messalla was born around 65–64 B.C. in view of his association as a student with the younger Marcus Cicero (b. 65) and his consulship in 31 B.C.; cf. Syme, *JRS* 43 (1953), 152 (= *Roman Papers*, p. 238).

⁸⁵ As Rodgers notes (op. cit. p. 174 n. 15), the successors of Capito and Nerva, who died in office, took up their positions in the following year.

⁸⁶ This paper has been developed from material included in my Ph.D. thesis, *A Commentary on the Panegyricus Messallae* (London, 1982), pp. 362 ff. I wish to thank my examiners, Professor O. Skutsch (Supervisor) and Professor R. G. M. Nisbet, and the editors of *Classical Quarterly* for their helpful criticism.