

THREE AMBIVII

I. The name earned early notoriety from L. Ambivius Turpio, the actor who performed in all the plays of Terence. It appealed to Lucilius:

quid tibi ego ambages Ambivi scribere coner?¹

Also to Wilhelm Schulze, duly citing the Lucilian reference.² In the sequel the nomen failed to enlist proper regard. Three persons bore it, diverse in life and rank: a tavern keeper on the Via Latina, a gourmet writer, a procurator governing Judaea. To the first and to the third, erudition in the recent time denies recognition; and the second through inadvertence misses his place and period. The Ambivii call for redemption. The venture will lead along circuitous or devious paths, 'per ambages', in the pursuit of names and identities. From that operation various instruction accrues on the flank.

II. First, a casual notice in the criminal record of a family of the better sort at Larinum. Cluentius and his slaves, so it was alleged, had made an assault on 'Ambivium quendam, coponem de via Latina' (*Pro Cluentio* 163).

Traditional texts remained content with that name.³ Not so long ago recourse to manuscripts produced 'A. Bivium'. It was adopted in two standard editions.⁴ Had editors given a thought to nomenclature, they might have conceived some disquiet. Absent from the repertorium, the nomen appeared to lack attestation. In itself no bar, to be sure. The dense forest of local Italian nomenclature carries plenty of unique specimens. Reassurance could be sought from 'Bivellius' and 'Bivonius'.⁵

A parallel offers, viz. 'Luranius' in a passage of Quintilian (9.4.38). Never to be found elsewhere, but justified by 'Lurius'. Hence no certainty in the emendation 'Veranius', highly attractive though it be for several reasons.⁶

Finally, two specimens of 'Bivius' could in fact be conjured up. They had been supposed mistakes, easy enough, for the familiar 'Vibius'.⁷

Not that it matters. An inscription now decides. L. Ambeivius L. f. Paetus erected a handsome funerary monument for his freedmen. It was found on the territory of Tusculum, just off the course of the Via Latina.⁸ Therefore none other than the 'copo' in Cicero's oration.⁹ Or if not, a member of the same family and close in date.

III. Next, the author M. Ambivius. His name stands in a valuable passage of Columella:

tum demum nostri generis, postquam a bellis otium fuit, quasi quoddam tributum victui humano conferre designati non sunt, ut M. Ambivius et Maenas Licinius, tum etiam C. Matius: quibus studium fuit pistoris et coci, nec minus cellarii diligentiam suis praeceptis instituere (12.4.2).

The date of this authority on domestic economy has suffered neglect or worse in

¹ Lucilius 1281 M.

² Schulze, *LE* 68.

³ Thus Fruechtel (Teubner, 1933), as Orelli, *Onom. Tull.* (1837), and Klebs, *RE* I, 1804.

⁴ Clark (OCT, 1905); Boyancé (Budé, 1953).

⁵ Schulze, *LE* 227, adduced four instances of 'Bivellius' from Italian towns, one of 'Bivonius' (*CIL* v.4487: Brixia).

⁶ On which, *CQ* 31 (1981), 424 = *Roman Papers* (1984), iii.1417. Further, 'Names and identities in Quintilian', *Acta Classica* 28 (1985), forthcoming.

⁷ *CIL* viii.5730 (Sigus); *Epigraphica* 28 (1976), 142 (Thurii). Each indexed under 'Vibius'.

⁸ G. Manganaro, *Arch. class.* 10 (1958), 207ff., with Pl. LXVIII, 1. The site is Torre de Mezzavia.

⁹ The tavern keeper was duly cited by Manganaro and by Degraffi, *ILLRP* 927a. Not however under *AE* 1960, 60.

learned compilations. A cursory mention assigned him to the late epoch of the Republic.¹⁰ The language of the agronomer contradicts. It declares the years of 'otium' after warfare, the happy dispensation of 'pax Augusta'.

If it were needed, the juxtaposition of C. Matius confirms. Which entails a digression. For a long time this author was held identical with Matius, the loyal friend of Caesar the Dictator, who wins enduring fame from his dignified response to petulant remarks of Cicero (*Ad fam.* 11.28). That incautious assumption was dispelled by Cichorius. Caesar's friend, so he demonstrated, was well on in years. Amity with Caesar (and also with Cicero) went back a long way.¹¹

In contrast, C. Matius, the influential agent of Caesar Augustus, named by Tacitus: 'Matios posthac et Vedios et cetera equitum Romanorum praevalida nomina referre nihil attinuerit' (*Ann.* 12.60.4). That Matius should be cited along with Vedius Pollio, and subsequent to Oppius and Balbus ('posthac'), gave a clear sign. Furthermore, the testimony of Pliny. C. Matius, whom he styles 'divi Augusti amicus', was the first man to devise 'nemora tonsilia'. The innovation occurred 'intra hos LXXX annos' (*N.H.* 12.13). Pliny thus puts Matius in the vicinity of 3 B.C. – when Caesar's friend would be over ninety.

Another passage in Columella registers the three books that Matius composed (12.46.1). It was his purpose 'urbanas mensas et lauta convivia instruere'. Therefore not of much concern to the writer who extolled 'rustica simplicitas' and went on to talk about apples. He had previously alluded to the excellent 'mala Matiana' that afford not merely 'voluptas' but 'salubritas'.¹²

The demonstration of Cichorius received firm endorsement from Münzer.¹³ Nevertheless, the standard manual of Latin literature, while betraying vague awareness of Cichorius' contribution, failed to draw the necessary conclusions.¹⁴ Several scholars hesitated or were guilty of negligence.¹⁵

IV. The second Matius redeems Marcus Ambivius for his proper season. The shape of his nomen should be an incitement to fanciers of nomenclature – and to students of social history. Persons of rank who carry the termination '-ivius' are not easy to light upon in any age. A short list is instructive, from 'Andivius' to 'Salivius'.¹⁶ The blatant exception is C. Orchivius, praetor in 66 B.C. He comes of an old Praenestine family.¹⁷ Many of that class were extinguished in Sulla's massacre.

More important, the distribution of the name. The city of Rome yields more than fifty Ambivii (nearly the half women). Where a praenomen is attached, 'Publius' prevails. There is no Marcus Ambivius in the collection. Most of these people appear libertine. The only noteworthy item is 'Ambeivia L. f. mater', who stands first on the substantial monument of the Rusticelii.¹⁸

¹⁰ Schanz-Hosius, *Gesch. der r. Lit.* (1927), i.⁴ 604.

¹¹ C. Cichorius, *Römische Studien* (1922), 245ff.

¹² Columella 5.10.16. To the testimonia in *PIR*² M 369 is to be added Suetonius, *Dom.* 21 (the temperate habits of an emperor). Also Quintilian 3.1.18, which confirms the literary interests of this Matius. The rhetor Apollodorus of Pergamum sent to Matius the text of his 'Ars'.

¹³ Münzer, *RE* XIV, 2210.

¹⁴ Schanz-Hosius, op. cit. (1927), i. 605. And in (1935), ii. 358, occurs only the solitary reference to Matius in relation to Apollodorus (Quintilian 3.1.18).

¹⁵ Thus no hint in Koestermann's note on *Ann.* 12.60.4. Further, one Matius, firmly, in C. Nicolet, *L'Ordre Équestre* (1974), ii. 947ff. And observe Shackleton Bailey on *Ad Att.* 9.11.2: 'may have been his son'.

¹⁶ Schulze, *LE* 68.

¹⁷ On whom, Münzer, *RE* XVIII, 907f.: with full documentation on the name.

¹⁸ *CIL* vi.11534f. These Rusticelii have 'Scaptia' for tribe. For the nomen, *LE* 111.

By contrast, sparsity in towns of Italy. From Treia in Picenum and Perugia down to Misenum, only five specimens, none significant or early in date.¹⁹ The provinces of the Roman West are a blank, except for Narbo.²⁰ No surprise: that ancient colony exhibits a collection of uncommon names, from 'Appaeus' to 'Vifidius'.²¹ Africa is a receptacle of rarities, some of them found nowhere in the country of their origin. But Africa remains mute until Ambibius, a village bishop in the late age.²²

On that showing, utility derives from specimens in the eastern lands. A bilingual inscription at Miletus, of early date, discloses Ambeivia L. f. and Ambeivius Eucleratus.²³ The name recurs there in the Antonine age with Q. Ambivius Macer, a local worthy.²⁴ Others may well turn up. Finally, and sometimes overlooked, C. Ambivius Balbus, whom Athens honoured with a dedication in the early imperial epoch.²⁵

V. Uncommon names certify the Italian diaspora, some of extreme rarity.²⁶ Small men abound, and freedmen, but the record conveys persons of substance who may have links with education and letters. Suetonius registered Aeficius Calvinus, an 'eques Romanus praedives' (*De gramm.* 3). This man, or perhaps his son, is discovered as M. Aeficius Calvinus, honoured at Samos with the title 'praefectus'.²⁷ He attracts and deserves full attention, along with eastern specimens of the rare nomen.²⁸

Varro's friends knew the wide world. For interlocutors in his dialogue the author selected men with suitable nomenclature, Agrius and Agrasius in the first place. A certain Vaccius duly declares 'meae partes quoniam boves ibi' (*R.R.* 1.5.2). A son, or a member of the same family, namely L. Vaccius Labeo, resided at Cyme during the reign of Augustus. He modestly deprecated the title of 'Founder': enough that he be 'Benefactor'.²⁹

Varro's opulent friends were not alien to literary interests. For example, C. Agrius is styled 'eques Romanus Socraticus'; and L. Abuccius had written 'Luciliano caractere'.³⁰ To this cultivated category may pertain M. Ambivius, the gourmet author a generation later.

VI. So much having been said about Ambivii (and of necessity about C. Matius), equity demands inspection of the other writer who contributed to the good life. The more so in that he risks being lost to sight.³¹ Manifold problems ensue.

¹⁹ *LE* 68.

²⁰ *CIL* xii.4573.

²¹ O. Hirschfeld, *Kl. Schr.* (1913), 31.

²² He got a missive from Augustine (*Epp.* 175).

²³ *CIL* iii.13762 = *Didyma* 525. The verses that follow were dated by Wilhelm to the middle of the second century. See Peek, *Gr. Vers-Inschriften* (1955), no. 1762, with brief comment by L. Robert, *Opera Minora Selecta* (1969), 1653. Further, *SEG* 30 (1980), 1292.

²⁴ For this man and his family, *Didyma* 182; 243f.; 359.

²⁵ *IG* ii² 4166, cf. P. Graindor, *Athènes sous Auguste* (1927), 61. He observed 'omis dans la RE et les suppléments'.

²⁶ See the Index to J. Hatzfeld, *Les Trafiquants italiens dans l'Orient Hellénistique* (1919). Observe, for example, Aborieni, Acoreni, Ambasii, Aplasii, Apustii, Atalinii.

²⁷ *SEG* 1.388. And Athens paid honour to his daughter (*IG* ii² 4243).

²⁸ C. Nicolet, *L'Ordre Équestre* (1974), ii. 760f. Add a magistrate on a coin of Corinth (M. Grant, *FITA* [1946], 266f.).

²⁹ *IGR* iv.1302.

³⁰ Varro, *R.R.* 1.1.2; 3.2.17.

³¹ Being absent from *RE* and from *PIR*² L and M.

(1) Traditional texts of Columella style him 'Maenas Licinius'.³² The latest editor, with appeal to manuscripts, avows perplexity and prints '†Mecenas† Licinius'.³³

(2) The cognomen of this Licinius may be 'Maenas', 'Menas', or 'Mena'. It has nothing to do with Menas, otherwise Menodorus, the freedman and admiral of Sextus Pompeius.³⁴

(3) 'Maenas' exists as a nomen, patently Etruscan (*CIL* 11.2059: Perusia; 10.4960: Aesernia). To that rubric belongs the enigmatic P. Menates P. f., a plebeian aedile on a milestone of the Via Flaminia (*ILS* 5082), and a Menates in Varro (*R.R.* 2.1.1 etc.).³⁵

(4) A Menas occurs in Varro (2.3.10).³⁶ He bred goats, named along with Gaberius, who had a thousand of them on his estate near Rome, and with Murrius, otherwise on renown for his mules at Reate.³⁷ The name should perhaps be 'Maenas'.

(5) For 'Mena' as cognomen, observe (a) P. Titinius Mena, who brought the first barbers to Rome in 300 B.C., so Varro states, adducing his monument at Ardea (2.11.10); (b) Volteius Mena in Horace, the client and friend of Marcius Philippus (*Epp.* 1.7.55); (c) C. Sergius M. f. Vel. Mena, the soldier killed in battle in the year 90 (*ILS* 29).

(6) Finally, 'Mena' as cognomen is registered some twenty times in *CIL* 6, but 'Menas' only once: the freedman L. Sergius Menas (26323).

VII. Hence an imbroglia. Yet there is a path of escape from 'variarum ambage viarum', to use a phrase of Ovid (*Met.* 8.161). At the head of a fine Roman monument stands M. Licinius Mena, freedman of a woman. He was the 'curator' of a guild of musicians (their names follow), and he set it up 'sua pecunia'. The lettering is assessed as 'liberae rei publicae'.³⁸ This man looks like the father of the author.

Musicians, actors and the like could acquire much favour and influence. The notorious paragon is the Sardinian: Tigellius in Cicero, Tigellius Hermocrates in Horace. Patently one person.³⁹ Further, a freedman.⁴⁰

The three authors cursorily cited by Columella illustrate refinement in the arts of living. They also belie and show up a prosperous age that advertised ancestral frugality and 'rustica simplicitas'. When the years of tribulation were over the habits of the previous age came back.⁴¹ High society had then competed or blended congenially with persons of lower station in circles that included characters like Volumnius Eutrapelus and the scholarly Nicias from Cos.⁴²

Vedius Pollio and Maecenas perpetuated the tradition. It was enhanced by Gavius Apicius, who became a proverb and a legend.⁴³ The government could do nothing.

³² Thus Gesner (Mannheim, 1781). Also the Loeb edition (1955). Likewise J. André, *L'Alimentation et la cuisine à Rome* (1961), 217.

³³ V. Lundström (Uppsala, 1968). From MSS, he also cited 'Bascenas', 'Vascenas', 'Bastenas'.

³⁴ He is 'Menodorus' in Appian, 'Menas' in Plutarch, Dio, the Latin writers; cf. Münzer, *RE* XV, 896ff.

³⁵ Schulze, *LE* 185; 286.

³⁶ Not in *RE*.

³⁷ For Murrius, Münzer, *RE* XVI, 669. There is no call to emend 'Gaberius' (as suggested by Nicolet, op. cit. 163). The name, preternaturally rare, got to Narbo (*CIL* xii.4883).

³⁸ *CIL* vi.33968 = *ILS* 5246. Not in *ILLRP*.

³⁹ Münzer, *RE* VIA, 943. He was taken to task by Fraenkel, who used the word 'unfortunately' (*Horace* [1957], 86 n. 2).

⁴⁰ S. Treggiari, *Roman Freedmen during the Late Republic* (1969), 269.

⁴¹ J. Griffin, *JRS* 66 (1976), 87ff. = *Latin Poets and Roman Life* (1985), 1ff.

⁴² On this society, *JRS* 51 (1961), 23ff. = *Roman Papers* (1979), 518ff. (discussing Vedius Pollio).

⁴³ *PIR*² G 91; Schanz-Hosius, op. cit. (1935), ii.⁴ 791f.

Tiberius Caesar was against luxury – but he deprecated any effort to curb it through legislation. In comment on his dispatch to the Senate, Tacitus declared that conspicuous expenditure flourished all the way from the aftermath of Actium until Nero's end.⁴⁴

VIII. Finally, M. Ambivius, the procurator governing Judaea c. A.D. 9. Confronted with ἀμβιβουχος in the text of Josephus (*AJ* 18.31), Casaubon divined 'Ambivius'. By mishap, 'Ambibulus', the conjecture of Niese, won preference in standard works.⁴⁵ So much so that as *PIR*² A 557 he stands firm and uncontested, with no hint of Casaubon. Various scholars concur.⁴⁶

At first glance 'M. Ambibulus' is far from prepossessing. His style (praenomen + cognomen) will not be easy to match among Romans in the pages of Josephus. Again, the cognomen is both peculiar and uncommon.⁴⁷ No objection, one concedes, in a sequence of procurators that went on to exhibit a 'Pilatus'.⁴⁸ Yet 'Ambibulus' comes on show for the first time with the Eggii of Aeclanum, in sudden eminence unexplained. One of them, C. Eggius Ambibulus, adlected to the patriciate by Trajan, became *consul ordinarius* in 126.⁴⁹ Further, Pisidian Antioch discloses 'Eggia] C. f. Amb[ibula' as the wife (the second wife) of the polyonymous P. Calvisius Ruso who was legate of Cappadocia–Galatia about the year 106.⁵⁰ Then follows L. Varius Ambibulus, consul suffect in 132 or 133.⁵¹

So far Ambibuli. Negative arguments are often circular or hazardous. Let it suffice to adduce Marcus Ambivius the author, known no doubt to Casaubon but in the sequel by many overlooked.⁵² The procurator may be identified without discomfort as his son.⁵³

IX. The post was novel and important. When Caesar Augustus in A.D. 6 decided to depose Archelaus the ethnarch and annex Judaea, he entrusted the task to Quirinius, the legate of Syria, and to Coponius, who remained as governor. Josephus furnishes the sequence.⁵⁴ Coponius did not stay there for long. M. Ambivius followed, during whose tenure old Salome passed away. Next Annus Rufus, in Judaea when Augustus died. Tiberius replaced him with Valerius Gratus, in office for eleven years (from 15 to 26), anticipating the period accorded to Pontius Pilatus.⁵⁵

All four have no attestation save from Josephus. Nothing can be done with Annus Rufus or Valerius Gratus (typical for drab nomenclature). Coponius is in another case.

⁴⁴ *Ann.* 3.55.

⁴⁵ Thus P. v. Rohden, *RE* I, 1798.

⁴⁶ L. H. Feldman (Loeb, 1969); E. M. Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule* (1976), 156; G. Vermes and F. Millar in Schürer's *History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (revised edition, 1973), i.382. They all note the problem of the name – but omit Casaubon's emendation.

⁴⁷ Only five specimens in *CIL* vi. And Africa yields only one (viii.6023). It apparently baffled I. Kajanto, *The Latin Cognomina* (1965).

⁴⁸ Of which, only two specimens, and one of them (*CIL* xi.4396: Ameria) may not be genuine; cf. *Historia* 27 (1978), 601f. = *RP* iii (1984), 1117f.

⁴⁹ *ILS* 1054.

⁵⁰ *AE* 1914, 217; cf. Groag under *PIR*² C 350. The lady lacks an entry under the Eggii. For the identity of this Calvisius Ruso (to be dissevered from the suffectus of 79), see *ZPE* 56 (1984), 173ff.

⁵¹ For his career, *ILS* 9486 (Cuicul). For his father, a procurator, *AE* 1971, 85 (Capua).

⁵² Casaubon's studies in the *Historia Augusta* might sharpen an interest in unusual names.

⁵³ If so, one entry to be abolished in *PIR*² A – and two to accrue.

⁵⁴ *AJ* 18.31ff.

⁵⁵ Hence early confirmation of the ruler's noteworthy practices (*Ann.* 1.80).

He belonged to a family of ancient repute at Tibur, so it can be conjectured.⁵⁶ It had already produced a senator.⁵⁷ For Ambivius a *patria* might be sought in old Latium or in the Sabine country, given the shape of his name.

For this procurator, high favour is manifest with the rulers of Rome. Not only with Augustus but with the partner and successor. Ti. Caesar was addicted to polite letters – and also, although austere, something of an epicure, as is disclosed by sporadic notices in Pliny.⁵⁸ Moreover, Judaea, recently in insurrection, demanded in a governor some military experience gained in officer posts. And familiarity with the lands of Greek speech would help.

Emphasis has gone to the distribution of the uncommon nomen, not missing C. Ambivius Balbus, to whom Athens paid honour.⁵⁹ Hence a chance that M. Ambivius himself belongs to the Italian diaspora. If so, predecessor to Vergilius Capito (prefect of Egypt under Claudius Caesar), who was on prominence at Miletus, and to Gessius Florus of Clazomenae, the last and the worst of the procurators in Judaea.⁶⁰

In any event, retrieved through the parent, Marcus Ambivius aggregates to a numerous company of wealthy equestrians who, proficient in finance and in economic enterprise, and not refusing the refinements of life, are already on parade in the closing epoch of the Republic. They go on to lend their talents to the service of the Caesars, and some to be progenitors of senators.

Wolfson College, Oxford

RONALD SYME

⁵⁶ Cicero, *Pro Balbo* 52. To the rubric add *ILS* 3700: 'Feliciteati | T. Cauponium T. f. | C. Aufestius C. f. | aed.'.

⁵⁷ Viz. the father-in-law of P. Silius Nerva (Velleius 2.83.3).

⁵⁸ On which, *Historia* 23 (1974), 491 = *RP* (1984), iii.947.

⁵⁹ *IG* ii² 4166.

⁶⁰ R. Stiglitz, *RE* VIIIA, 2419ff.; *PIR*² G 170.

VIRGIL'S 'WHITE BIRD'

Optima vinetis satio, cum vere rubente
candida venit avis longis invisa colubris

(*Georgic* 2.319–20)

Best sow your vineyards when in blushing Spring
Comes the white bird long-bodied snakes abhor.

(James Rhoades).

'Candida avis' is usually assumed to be the white stork (*Ciconia ciconia*). T. E. Page, the Loeb editors and others give a footnote to this effect. T. F. Royds in *The Beasts, Birds and Bees of Virgil* (Oxford, 1914) says of 'Candida avis':

'This is by common consent 'Ciconia alba', the white stork. It is a migrant in Mediterranean countries... a most useful bird feeding chiefly on snakes and other reptiles'

He then cites Pliny (*N.H.* 10.31) and Juvenal (14.74–5) 'serpente ciconia pullos nutrit' to confirm the snake-eating propensities of the stork.

Virgil's ornithological mystery is not, however, quite so easily resolved. There is another contender for 'candida avis', one more convincing both on a textual and an ornithological basis – *Circaetus gallicus*, the short-toed eagle.

The short-toed eagle is the only European snake eagle, its diet being almost exclusively snakes. Lizards, and much less frequently small mammals or birds, may also be taken. There are several reasons why it is to be preferred in the present context: