

NOBILITAS AND NOVITAS¹

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I. No Roman definition of *nobilis* or *novus homo* exists. Mommsen held that the *nobiles* comprised:

(a) all patricians;
(b) those descended from patricians who had effected a *transitio ad plebem*;
(c) those descended from plebeians who had held curule offices, viz. the offices of dictator, *magister equitum*, censor, consul, praetor, curule aedile.² They were thus identical with the persons who had the *ius imaginum*. (On this footing Mommsen ought to have included plebeian aediles, at least for the post-Sullan era.)³ All others, including those who were the first of their lines to hold curule office, were *novi*. This theory has been generally abandoned in favour of Gelzer's; Afzelius argued that it corresponded to the conception of nobility in the second century, but not to that prevalent in Cicero's time. Yet it may after all be right.

II. Gelzer contended that in Cicero's time nobility was predicated only of those who 'belong to consular families' (p. 31), though he was willing to treat the families of those who had held the dictatorship or military tribunate with consular powers as of equal status (p. 32). In summarizing his theory he sharpened the definition by saying that nobility attached only to the descendants of men who had held the offices concerned (p. 52). He drew up lists of those named as *nobiles* by Cicero,⁴ and of attested *novi homines* which seemed to show that the former, with certain exceptions that he sought to explain, were known to be of consular descent, and that the latter included men whose fathers had held the praetorship. In his judgement all other reliable evidence fortified this conclusion. In particular, he argued that Cicero was unable to claim nobility for Murena, although he was the fourth of his line to have been praetor. Gelzer also cited a statement that Livy (VI 37, 11) puts into the mouth of the plebeian tribunes of 367, that once plebeians were consuls, they would transmit nobility to their children. However, in 367 neither praetorship nor curule aedileship existed. And, as the passage strictly implies that there were as yet no plebeian nobles, although plebeians had already held the consular tribunate, it would seem that Livy did not suppose that that office gave a title to nobility.

III. Gelzer's theory would admit of minor modifications without being subverted. It goes without saying that for the purpose of determining nobility the office of dictator, and perhaps that of *magister equitum* (which he did not consider),⁵ must have ranked with that of consul. This might not be true of the military tribunate with consular power. Whatever were the real reasons for which this office was intermittently substituted for the consulship between 444 and 367, the fact that the tribunes lacked the right to triumph shows that they were not in all respects regarded as ranking with consuls;⁶ moreover, according to the tradition, the patricians opened the office to plebeians while maintaining that they would sully the consulship. Gelzer only allowed the consular tribunate to count with the consulship, in order to explain the right of Ser. Sulpicius Rufus, *cos.* 51, to be styled noble. But Sulpicius might probably have adduced consular ancestry,⁷ and in any case seems to have founded his claim to nobility on being a patrician. It is probable that Cicero's insinuation that it could be derived only from a remote office-holder is tendentious (cf. XXIV), and that

¹ Gelzer = M. Gelzer, *The Roman Nobility* (tr. R. Seager, 1969), which gives a slightly revised version of *Die Nobilität der röm. Rep.* (1912), reprinted in *Kl. Schr.* I 17 ff. Cf. H. Strasburger, *RE* xvii 785 ff.; 1223 ff.; A. Afzelius, *Cl. et Med.*, 1938, 40 ff., accepting his views, which Afzelius later modified in *Cl. et Med.*, 1945, 150 ff. (cf. XX; my paragraphs are numbered for convenience of reference in the list of XIII). Documentation on individual persons will be found in Broughton, *MRR*. Consuls are identified by the first year in which they held the office whether or not they held it more than once.

² *StR* III³ 462 f.

³ *StR* I³ 442 ff., cf. 401 f. *Verr.* II 5, 36 shows that Cicero secured the *ius* on becoming plebeian aedile, not (as Mommsen thought) curule aedile (cf. *MRR*

II 136 n. 5).

⁴ The list is somewhat lengthened in the English translation. Gelzer also listed those who are called by Cicero *clarissimi*, all nobles or consulars with three flattering exceptions, or *principes civitatis*, all consulars apart from Cato Uticensis (whose exceptional influence in my view justifies the appellation); a fuller list of the latter in *RE* xxii 2014 ff. (Wickert) confirms Gelzer's interpretation.

⁵ M. Antonius, *cos.* 99, could perhaps have claimed descent from a *mag. eq.* in 334 or 333; unlikely.

⁶ *StR* II³ 190.

⁷ Gelzer assumed his descent from a consular tribune of 388, 384, 383 (cf. *RE* IV A 850 f.). Why not from a consul of 500, 490, 461, or 434?

Gelzer is wrong in denying Mommsen's view that all patricians were nobles. Livy at least often uses the term 'nobility' to describe the patricians of the early Republic.⁸ Anachronistic as this usage doubtless is, it may spring from the fact that in historic times all patricians were automatically included in the nobility, though they could also be distinguished from plebeian nobles. Hence perhaps fictitious claims to patrician or Trojan ancestry (n. 14).

IV. By limiting nobility to descendants of consuls, etc., Gelzer excluded brothers and collaterals. Perhaps this is over-rigid. If it is right, some consuls of consular families must be classed as *novi*. To take one specimen, Münzer held that the founder of the nobility of the plebeian Sempronii was P. Sempronius P. f. C. n. Sophus, *cos.* 304, whose son was consul in 268 (*RE* II A 1360). But C. Sempronius Ti. f. Ti. n. Blaesus, *cos.* 253, M. Sempronius C. f. M. n. Tuditanus, *cos.* 240, and Ti. Sempronius Ti. f. C. n. Gracchus, *cos.* 238, were not his descendants; their grandfathers, Tiberius, Marcus and Gaius must have been roughly his coevals. Ti. Sempronius C. f. C. n. Longus, *cos.* 218, might indeed have been his great-grandson, but cannot have been son of any of the consuls of the preceding generation. Again the relation of the consular Tuditani is problematic. P. Sempronius C. f. C. n. Tuditanus, *cos.* 204, was at best a nephew of the consul of 240, and M. Sempronius M. f. C. n. Tuditanus, *cos.* 185, flourished a little late to be his son, and might have been son of an elder brother of the consul of 204; the former is certainly, and the latter possibly, not *nobilis* by Gelzer's strict criteria. C. Sempronius C. f. C. n. Tuditanus, *cos.* 129, could have been descended from the first consular of his family, but from none of the others. We thus have five to seven *novi* among the Sempronii on Gelzer's view. Though the Longi and Tuditani were kin (*Val. Max.* VII 8, 1), the relationships between all these families are at best conjectural, and the praetorian Aselliones, to judge from their *praenomina*, Aulus and Lucius, were not connected with them at all.⁹ Similarly M. Fulvius Cn. f. Cn. n. Paetinus, *cos.* 299, the ancestor of the Fulvii Nobiliores, and C. Fulvius Cn. f. Cn. n. Centumalus, *cos.* 298, can be presumed brothers, but neither can have been descended from the first Fulvian consul, L. Fulvius Curvus (322), whose son, Marcus Curvus Paetinus, was consul in 305. Münzer supposed that M. Fulvius Q. f. M. n. Flaccus, *cos.* 264, was a grandson of the consul either of 304 or of 299; the time interval is rather short. Probably we should posit a fourth *novus* in Gelzer's sense among the Fulvii. Apparently all came from Tusculum, and they were no doubt blood-relations; both the consuls of 305 and 299 bear the *cognomen* Paetinus.¹⁰

V. The more or less contemporary rise of men bearing the same *nomen* like the Fulvii and Sempronii tempts scholars to infer that they belonged to different families of the same *gens*, bound together by blood-relationship, and that the prestige that one branch of the *gens* acquired by election to the consulship, as well as the more direct support that it could then furnish, helped in the advancement of collaterals. Naturally this may well be correct in some instances. It is also sometimes assumed in default of evidence, that kinship links men bearing the same *nomen* (but not the same *cognomen*) in different generations, and even that nobility had been transmitted from one to the other. However, great caution should be observed. Varro indeed, who knew no more than we do of the times in which the origins of Roman society are buried, supposed that all the members of the gens Aemilia sprang from a common ancestor, Aemilius (*LL* VIII 4). So too legend made Iulus progenitor of the Iulii. The not infrequent use of *familia* as an equivalent for *gens* reflects belief in gentile blood-relationship, but does not prove it to have been well founded. The belief no doubt extended to plebeian as well as patrician *gentes*; even if, as some scholars hold, only the patricians had had a gentile organization in some remote period, for which evidence

⁸ II 27, 3; III 11, 6; 66, 2; 67, 8; IV 4, 7; 15, 5-8; 60, 7; VI 36, 12; 42, 9-11. Later he distinguishes patricians and plebeian nobles, XXII 35, 2; XXXIX 40, 3.

⁹ Aselliones: Badian, *Proc. Afr. Class. Ass.*, 1968, 1 ff. Livy XXXIX 40, 3 makes the consul of 185 member of a noble family; if he or his source knew the facts, either that man was the late-born son of the consul of 240, or the son of a praetor, and that sufficed for nobility, or Livy counted as nobles collaterals as

well as descendants of consuls. See stemma in *RE* II A 1439 (Münzer). Livy also classes as noble C. Atilius Serranus, *pr.* 218, (presumably father or grandfather of the consul of 170), who is either descended from a praetor, or from a consul with different *cognomen*.

¹⁰ Afzelius, 1945 (art. cit., n. 1), 164 ff. made similar comments on the Sempronii and Fulvii. Münzer's stemma, *RE* VII 231; 'Tusculan origin, *ibid.* 229.

is lacking and whose features are variously delineated by different masters of the art of historical divination, in historic times the Romans themselves recognized plebeian *gentes*. Now the *gentiles* had in certain circumstances the right of succession on intestacy: how were they to be identified? Not, according to the learned jurist and Pontifex Maximus, Q. Mucius Scaevola (*cos.* 95), whom Cicero followed (*Topica* 29), by proof of kinship: *gentiles* were simply men of a common *nomen*, provided that they were also descended from free-born men who had never been subject to slavery and that they had not been *capite deminuti*.¹¹ This definition could never have been propounded (whether or not it corresponded to the historic truth) unless it had been clear in Mucius' time that there was no demonstrable blood relationship within every *gens* between its members.¹² L. Papirius Paetus, who evidently thought himself entitled as a member of the *gens Papiria* to set up *imagines* in his house of *gentiles* who had held office, cannot to his knowledge have been descended from the patrician Papirii, of whose very existence he was unaware, nor have been connected with the Papirii Carbones, or else Cicero would not have expressed to him contempt for that family: the *nomen* alone gave him membership of the *gens*.¹³

VI. It was perhaps on the basis of Scaevola's conception of a *gens* that Suetonius could write (*Nero* 1): 'ex gente Domitia duae familiae claruerunt, Calvinorum et Ahenobarborum'. He does not himself attempt to trace the descent of Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus (*cos.* 192) from the Calvini (*cos.* 332, 283, 53), nor is it attested anywhere else. The common *nomen* may be the only link between them. Moreover, even if the two families were ultimately of the same stock, it would still be rash to assume that the consul of 332 or 283 was the actual ancestor of the consul of 192. Consider the case of the Octavii. Suetonius' genealogy of Augustus looks credible, apart from the claim that the Octavii had once been patrician.¹⁴ The first consul of the *gens* (165) was apparently nephew of an ancestor of Augustus who served as military tribune in 205 (surely the emperor's great-great-grandfather, and not, as Suetonius says, his *proavus*). Thus Augustus was a mere collateral of the consular Octavii, as Ahenobarbus may have been a collateral of the Calvini, if he was related to them at all.

VII. Homonymy did not of course imply kinship, though on Scaevola's definition it did, subject to other conditions, involve community of *gens*. Cicero remarks (*Brutus* 62) how absurd it would be for him to claim descent from M. Tullius, *cos.* 500; I think we may infer *e silentio* that M. Tullius Decula (*cos.* 81) had also made no such claim, nor did Cicero assert any connection with him. Various plebeian families bore the same *nomina* as great patrician lines like the Claudii and Cornelii, and whatever the explanation may be, no one supposes that their homonymy implies blood-relationship (cf. n. 12). We surely know enough of the rise of M. Porcius Cato (*cos.* 195) to say that as no connection is attested between him and the Porcii Licini, with a notable praetor in 207, whose son was consul in 184, or P. Porcius Laeca (*pr.* 195), none existed.¹⁵ It cannot even be proved that all members of a patrician *gens* had originally been kindred by blood, but it is at least certain that the relationship between those lines which certainly had a common ancestor, like the Claudii Pulchri and Nerones, as well as between those for which no evidence can be adduced, like various branches of the Cornelii,¹⁶ became more and more distant in the course of time, at least in the absence of marriage ties. That was also true of some plebeian *gentes* like the Fulvii and Sempronii (IV). It is always imprudent to assume kinship on

¹¹ Kübler, *RE* VII 1176 ff., esp. 1180, 1184 f. (cf. also Cic., *Leg.* II 55); he presents the evidence with admirable clarity, but disguises some modern speculations as certified truths, cf. sceptical remarks in W. Kunkel, *KL Schr.* 456 ff.; 484 ff.; 556 f.

¹² cf. Cincius *ap.* Fest. 83 L. Mommsen's glosses on Scaevola's definition (*StR* III³ 11 f.; 27) are warranted only by his own dogmas. Kübler notes how the *lex Cornelia de falsis* made it a crime to take a false *nomen* with a view to sharing in the inheritance rights of *gentiles* (Paul. (?), *Sent.* v 25, 11). The obscure case in Cic., *de Orat.* I 176 (whose issue is unknown) may imply that the patrician Claudii and the Claudii Marcelli were (arguably) of the same *gens*.

¹³ *Fam.* IX 21, 2 f., cf. Münzer, *RE* XVIII 1002 ff.; his conclusion that some connection between patrician and plebeian Papirii may be assumed, though it cannot be proved, is perverse.

¹⁴ Even the praetorian Memmii boasted of Trojan origin (Virg., *Aen.* v 117; Lucret. I 42), the Calpurnii of descent from Numa (Plut., *Numa* 21, accepted in Fest. 41 L, denied by the annalist Gellius, Dion. Hal. II 76, 5).

¹⁵ *Contra* A. E. Astin, *Cato the Censor* (1978), 9.

¹⁶ cf. Münzer, *RE* IV 1249; 1355-7; 1429. The mutual relationships within one *stirps*, the Lentuli, usually elude us and were probably often remote; this fact somewhat qualifies its unsurpassed record of 29 consulships from 317 B.C. to A.D. 68.

the basis of a common *nomen*. The Murenæ, for instance, could evidently claim no descent from any branch of the Licinii of antique fame. Asconius, similarly, denies nobility to C. Licinius Sacerdos, a candidate for the consulship of 63 (p. 82 C). Some Licinii traced descent to C. Licinius Stolo, who was consul in 364 or 361; apparently a contemporary of Varro still bore the same *cognomen* (*RR* 1 2, 9), though no other consul is so named. The Licinii Crassi, the most distinguished family with the *nomen* (*cos.* 205, 171, 168, 131, 97, 95, 70), doubtless descended either from Stolo or from another Licinius (Calvus), who was also consul in the 360s.¹⁷ The first was P. Crassus P. f. P. n. (205). C. Licinius P. f. P. n. Varus, *cos.* 236, may have been his collateral, perhaps an uncle. With the exception of the consul of 131 (a grandson by adoption, a Mucius by birth), the other consular Crassi were not descended from him; those of 171 and 168 (both C. f. P. n.), the ancestors of the rest, were perhaps his nephews. Nor is there anything to connect the Luculli (*cos.* 151, 74, 73) or C. Licinius Getha (*cos.* 116) or the Licinii Nervæ (praetorian in the Republic) with the Crassi. If Cicero (*Att.* XIII 6a) classes L. Murena as one of the 'coniunctissimi' of L. Lucullus (*cos.* 74), the term does not unambiguously denote an agnatic tie, but if that is the meaning, it speaks against the existence of any such tie between Luculli and Crassi, since there was clearly none between the Murenæ and the Crassi.

VIII. Of course a difference in *cognomen* is not proof that there was no blood relationship. Between the early and the late Republic patrician families (for whom evidence is clearest) are known to have adopted new *cognomina*. The Claudii Pulchri and Neronæ had a common progenitor in Appius the censor. A grandson of P. Cornelius Rufinus (*cos.* 290, 277), who was praetor in 212, transmitted the *cognomen* of Sulla to his line. Among the Aemilii the *cognomen* Scaurus first appears with the consul of 115, who came of a branch that had long been so obscure that we cannot trace his descent from earlier Aemilii in the *Fasti*.¹⁸ So too the great plebeian house of the Iunii Bruti tended from early times to take *agnomina*, which at least in one instance could supplant the *cognomen*: the Pærae (*cos.* 266, 230) were Bruti by origin (Val. Max. II 4, 7). But no evidence links L. Pullus (*cos.* 249), M. Pennus (*cos.* 167)¹⁹ or the Silani (*cos.* 109, 62), destined for fatal distinction in the Principate, with the Bruti. Münzer noted (*RE* x 961) that the Silani preferred the same *praenomina*, Gaius, Decimus, Marcus and Lucius (we also have a P. Iunius Brutus, *pr.* 190), but three of these are so common that we could invoke coincidence, and it would be natural if a new family copied the use of the rather rarer Decimus from its illustrious homonyms. The first consul of the Silani (109) could in any event be reckoned noble if (as may well be the case) he was son of a man adopted into the family from the Manlii Torquati (ib. 1089), and the consul of 62 might be his grandson or, alternatively, could be otherwise descended from the Torquati. It can be argued that a Torquatus would not have accepted adoption into a family not already noble.

IX. However, in general we cannot be sure that there is any relationship between families of the same *nomen*, where the *cognomina* are not identical or where one family has a *cognomen* and the other has none.²⁰ And, even if some relationship subsists, descent of one consul from another may be susceptible of disproof. Whether or not the Acilii Glabrones and Balbi were related (both liked the unusual *praenomen* Manius), M'. Acilius C. f. L. n. Glabrio, *cos.* 191, was not the ancestor of M'. Acilius L. f. K. n. Balbus, *cos.* 150, and M. Fannius M. f. *cos.* 122 was not the son of C. Fannius C. f. C. n. Strabo, *cos.* 161; the time-interval and his lack of a *cognomen* are enough to show that he was also not his grandson: all were *novi* in Gelzer's sense. More doubt may arise over L. Aurelius L. f. L. n. Orestes, *cos.* 157. He is clearly not descended from C. Aurelius C. f. C. n. Cotta, *cos.* 200, but perhaps from C. Cotta, *cos.* 252, though there is no testimony that these two families or that of M. Aurelius Scaurus, *cos. suff.* 108, were of the same blood.

¹⁷ Livy xxx 1, 4 ff. calls P. Licinius P. f. P. n. Crassus *cos.* 205 'nobilissimum'. The superlative suggests the antiquity of his line; he at least is unlikely to have been of merely praetorian or aedilician descent (n. 9). Münzer (*RE* XIII 247) took P. Licinius P. f. P. n. Varus, *cos.* 236, to be his uncle; there is no proof. No other Licinius had been consul since the 360s.

¹⁸ Cic., *Mur.* 16; Ascon. p. 23 C.

¹⁹ Cicero calls his son a *gentilis* of the Bruti (*Brut.* 109), but that may mean only that he had the same *nomen* (cf. V).

²⁰ No Fannius but the consul of 161 has a *cognomen*. I think it unlikely that the *cognomen* of a man who had first ennobled a family would be discarded by his descendants, unless of course for the sake of greater distinction, as Pompey substituted Magnus for Strabo.

X. Gelzer (p. 52) comments on his list of attested *novi*: 'over a period of three hundred years, fifteen new men holding a total of twenty-four consulships. In the light of these figures one may speak of a predominance of the nobility . . .' The unwary reader might infer that there were not more *novi* on Gelzer's definition than those listed: as he knew, but failed to make clear, they were in fact far more numerous.

XI. As a general rule, the first consul of every plebeian house was a *novus*. Two possible classes of exceptions may be noted. (a) On Gelzer's view, which is disputable (cf. III), election as consular tribune conferred nobility. A few plebeians had been elected to that office. Of the plebeian *nomina* in the Fasti for the consular tribunate only the Atilii, Duillii, Licinii, Pomponii and Publilii recur after 366 in the consular lists, and only the Atilii and Licinii survived beyond 200. Licinius Calvus, consul in the 360s, Q. Publilius Philo (*cos.* 339) and the Duillii (*cos.* 336, 260) doubtless traced their descent to consular tribunes; but L. Atilius Luscus (444) and L. Atilius Priscus (399) are credited with *praenomina* and *cognomina* unknown in the consular Atilii Bulbi (245), Caiatini (258), Reguli (335-217) and Serrani (170, 136, 106), though Lucius is found without *cognomen* in a praetor of 197 and in some minor figures. The authenticity of *cognomina* in the early Fasti can no doubt be questioned. But if the *cognomina* of the fifth-century plebeians concerned were invented, we should expect them to be those borne by those later worthies who were seeking to authenticate the antiquity of their lines. If they are not the same, that of course may mean that the plebeian families had changed their *cognomina*, as indeed some are known (like the Iunii) or believed to have done later. However, proof of this is almost always lacking. It seems particularly hard to suppose that a *cognomen* was simply discarded without being replaced. Hence M'. Aquillius M'. f. M'. n., *cos.* 129, is unlikely to have even a connection with C. Aquillius Florus *cos.* 259, or with L. Aquillius Gallus, *pr.* 176²¹ (both families survived into the late Republic), nor will M. Antonius, *cos.* 99, have traced his descent to the Antonii Merendae who supposedly furnished a decemvir and a consular tribune in the fifth century. Beyond doubt, families could re-appear after long periods of oblivion,²² but the mere revival of a *nomen*, without *cognomen* or with a different *cognomen*, is insufficient proof of descent.

XII. Some plebeians were or claimed to be of patrician descent (I (b)). In the third century the patrician Servilii Gemini transferred to the plebs.²³ They were of course not *novi* when they reached the consulship. The Marcii traced their line to Ancus Marcius,²⁴ the Iunii Bruti to L. Brutus (*cos.* 509), who freed Rome from the Tarquins (Cicero, *Brutus* 53, etc.). If patrician descent conveyed nobility (III), all scions of these houses were probably accepted as noble without further inquiry. By Gelzer's criterion, however, we need always to prove a consular ancestor. The early consular Fasti contained some *nomina* that in later times were exclusively plebeian. Yet, according to the tradition, in those days the patricians had a monopoly of the office. Modern scholars have sometimes doubted the authenticity of the names and sometimes the patrician monopoly. It would not be relevant to consider these doubts, which were not entertained by Romans. The truth may well be that the names are mostly authentic and were borne by patricians, whose lines died out, while homonymous plebeian families survived.²⁵ (There were of course many plebeians with the same *nomina* as patrician houses that continued, Claudii, Cornelii etc.) Genuine *transitiones ad plebem* in fairly early times seem unlikely, but they were certainly alleged. Some plebeians did at least pretend to patrician consuls among their forebears; the Cassii and Minucii may

²¹ A claim to descent from patrician Aquillii (Livy II 4, 1, whom Gelzer (p. 38) taxes with error, but note the consul of 487 and consular tribune of 383) would have been still less plausible.

²² e.g. Scaurus, Ser. Sulpicius Rufus and L. Sergius Catilina, *pr.* 68, whose descent from consular Sergii Fidenates before 366 is posited by Gelzer; patrician status alone might justify his nobility (Sall., *Cat.* 5, 1); his great-grandfather, M. Sergius Silus (Pliny, *NH* VII 104 f.) was *pr.* 197.

²³ *RE* II A 1791 (Münzer).

²⁴ *RE* XIV 1535 ff. (Münzer). Some scholars propose patrician status at least for the Reges (*cos.* 118, 68), who have no known connections with other

lines. The Censorini (*cos.* 310, 149, 39) and Philippi (*cos.* 281, 186, 91, 56) had different and perhaps unrelated progenitors in C. Rutilus (*cos.* 357) and Q. Tremulus (*cos.* 306) respectively; Münzer's hypothesis that the Figuli (*cos.* 169, 62) were an offshoot of the Philippi is not certainly true. Three, perhaps four, *novi* in Gelzer's sense must be posited. Note also the praetorian Rallae.

²⁵ A thorough examination is available in the Bodleian Library at Oxford in A. Drummond's unpublished doctoral thesis, *History and Reliability of the early Fasti with special reference to the so-called Plebeian Consuls* (1974).

have found credit.²⁶ C. Cassius C. f. C. n. Longinus (171) and Q. Cassius L. f. Q. n. Longinus (164), who are presumed to have been the progenitors of all other consuls of the same family (127, 124, 107, 96, 73), and who were evidently distant cousins, were perhaps treated as descendants of Sp. Cassius Vicellinus (502), certainly as members of his family. The plebeian consul of 305, Ti. Minucius Augurinus, was plainly a real or putative descendant of patrician Minucii Augurini who held the consulship in the fifth century; however, there is no ground for thinking that M. Minucius C. f. C. n. Rufus (221) or Q. Minucius Q. f. L. n. Thermus (193) descended from this plebeian Augurinus, especially as that *cognomen* had not been abandoned; Augurini still appear as *monetales* as late as 135-4. Moreover, Q. Minucius C. f. C. n. Rufus (197) was certainly only a collateral of the consul of 221. All three are *novi* in Gelzer's classification, unless boasted patrician descent conferred nobility on them. Not all such pretensions found credit. Cicero mentions among the fictions of funeral laudations 'genera etiam falsa et ad plebem transitiones, cum homines humiliores in alienum eiusdem nominis infunderentur genus' (*Brutus* 62). The Octavii furnish one instance (Suet., *Aug.* 1), the attempt of P. Servilius Rullus (*tr. pl.* 63) to claim nobility, which was received impatiently by the people according to Cicero (*leg. agr.* II 19), may be another. Cicero could sharply distinguish between patrician and plebeian Papirii. His language does not suggest that the plebeian Papirii Carbones (*cos.* 120, 113, 85) ever affected to be of patrician stock; indeed the fact that his correspondent, L. Papirius Paetus, had ignorantly denied that there had ever been patrician Papirii may be taken to prove the contrary, all the more as the family of the Carbones was still represented in their day by a praetor of 62. The consuls of this family in 120 and 113 cannot possibly be accounted nobles in Gelzer's terms.

XIII. The following list names certain or possible *novi* by his definition during the 150 years from the end of the Hannibalic war to 49 B.C.²⁷ The upper limit is somewhat arbitrary, but is fixed at a point of time when the consulship had been so long open to plebeians that a numerous plebeian nobility (however it may be defined) had already formed to rival the patricians; a few remarks on earlier periods will be found in XXXII. The outbreak of war between Caesar and Pompey ended the dominance of the nobility. The names of those who were certainly or almost certainly of non-consular descent are mostly printed in small type, others in capitals. The second group includes Cassii and Minucii (nos. 2, 4, 15, 20), whose claim to patrician lineage, however fictitious, was no doubt accepted; it still remains true that their descent from patrician consuls is altogether unproven, but in my judgement (*contra* Gelzer) patrician lineage alone would have entitled them to claim nobility. If this were not conceded, the nobility of some truly patrician consuls would be in doubt; it is, for instance, possible that T. Quinctius Flamininus sprang from a cadet branch of the *gens*, which had never previously furnished a dictator, consul or consular tribune. In other respects the names are those which are at least dubious by Gelzer's criteria. With some misgivings I would grant nobility not only to the Cassii and Minucii named, and to L. Cornelius Cinna (no. 40) on the assumption that he was patrician, but to eleven other *incerti* (nos. 8, 14, 17, 18, 22, 25, 34, 45, 49, 51, 64) on the basis that there is a fair chance that they conform to Gelzer's criteria; in some cases their title becomes clearer, if nobility extended to descendants of all curule magistrates and to their close kin. All these men are excluded from subsequent consideration; the rest I shall categorize as putative *novi* (by Gelzer's standards), and argue later that most of them are more properly regarded as nobles.

1. 199 P. Villius Tappulus (Ti. f. Ti. n.)
2. 197 Q. MINUCIUS RUFUS (C. f. C. n.) See XII f.

²⁶ M. H. Crawford, *RRC*, pp. 273 ff.; 325; 403.

²⁷ Assuming with Broughton that Q. Mucius Scaevola, *pr.* 215, was elected consul for 220, though he did not take office, I take him to have ennobled his sons, *cos.* 175, 174 who would otherwise count as *novi* in Gelzer's sense, not in Mommsen's. I have also excluded Q. Hortensius L. f. Hortalus, *cos.* 69, on the basis that he could be a son of no. 50 as well

as a descendant of the dictator of 287 (though I think that dubious for any Hortensii of this period) and that, even if Cicero (*contra* Gelzer) might have accorded nobility to a man of praetorian lineage, his appellation of 'nobilissimus' (*Att.* XIII 13, 1) probably means that he was of more distinguished blood. Perhaps this is imprudent.

3. 195 M. Porcius Cato (M. f.) *Parvenu*²⁸
4. 193 Q. MINUCIUS THERMUS (Q. f. L. n.) See XII f.
5. 192 CN. DOMITIUS AHENOBARBUS (L. f. L. n.) See VI.
6. 191 M'. Acilius Glabrio (C. f. L. n.) Probably a *parvenu*, see n. 46.
7. 190 C. Laelius (C. f. C. n.) *Parvenu*?²⁹
8. 185 M. SEMPRONIUS TUDITANUS (M. f. C. n.) See n. 9 with text.
9. 184 L. Porcius Licinus (L. f. M. n.) Father, *pr.* 207.
10. 182 Cn. Baebius Tamphilus (Q. f. Cn. n.) } Brothers. Father, ambassador in 219
11. 181 M. Baebius Tamphilus (Q. f. Cn. n.) } and 218.
12. 180 C. Calpurnius Piso (C. f. C. n.) Father, *pr.* 211.
13. 176 Q. Petillius Spurius (C. f. Q. n.) *Parvenu*?
14. 172 P. AELIUS LIGUS (P. f. P. n.) Descent from P. Aelius Paetus, *cos.* 337, unproven.
15. 171 C. CASSIUS LONGINUS (C. f. C. n.) See XII f.
16. 170 A. Hostilius Mancinus (L. f. A. n.) No known connection with C. Hostilius Tubulus, *pr.* 209, or A. Hostilius Cato, *pr.* 207.
17. 170 A. ATILIUS SERRANUS (C. f. C. n.) Connection with earlier consular Atilii unattested. Descent from *pr.* of 218 can be presumed. Cf. also n. 9.
18. 167 M. IUNIUS PENNUS (M. f. M. n.) Connection with noble Iunii not established. Presumably son of *pr.* of 201. Cf. n. 19.
19. 165 Cn. Octavius (Cn. f. Cn. n.) Father, *pr.* 205. See XXIV.
20. 164 Q. CASSIUS LONGINUS (L. f. Q. n.) See XII f.
21. 163 M'. Iuventius Thalna (T. f. T. n.) Father, *pr.* 194.
22. 162 C. MARCIUS FIGULUS (C. f. Q. n.) See n. 24.
23. 161 C. Fannius Strabo (C. f. C. n.)
24. 160 L. Anicius Gallus (L. f. L. n.) No known connection with Q. Anicius Praenestinus, *aed. cur.* 304. See IX.
25. 157 L. AURELIUS ORESTES (L. f. L. n.)
26. 154 Q. Opimius (Q. f. Q. n.)
27. 153 T. Annius Luscus (T. f.) M. Annius (not necessarily connected) was *pr.* before 218, and the consul's father (or he himself) an ambassador in 172 and *IIIvir col. ded.* in 169.
28. 151 L. LICINIUS LUCULLUS (filiation not recorded) Homonym *aed. cur.* 202. M. Lucullus, *pr.* 186. See VII.
29. 150 M'. Acilius Balbus (L. f. K. n.) See IX.
30. 149 M'. Manilius (P. f. P. n.) Father, ambassador in 167.
31. 146 L. Mummius (L. f. L. n.) Father, *pr.* 177. See XXIV.
32. 145 L. Hostilius Mancinus (L. f. L. n.) Collateral of no. 17.
33. 141 Q. Pompeius (A. f.) *Parvenu* (XXIII).
34. 136 SEX. ATILIUS SERRANUS (M. f. C. n.) Collateral of no. 17, q.v.
35. 133 L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi (L. f. C. n.) Collateral, perhaps nephew, of no. 12.³⁰
36. 132 P. Rupilius (P. f. P. n.) Formerly in service of *publicani* (Val. Max. vi 9, 8). *Parvenu*?
37. 130 M. Perperna (M. f. L. n.) Father, ambassador in 168.³¹
38. 129 M'. Aquillius (M'. f. M'. n.) See XI.
39. 128 T. ANNIUS RUFUS (no filiation known) Not necessarily or probably son of no. 27, q.v.; would his son have

²⁸ A. E. Astin (n. 15), 1-3, cf. *YRS* 1972, 20 ff., rebuts the conjecture that because there is no mention of his grandfather in the Fasti the man was not a citizen.

²⁹ I see no ground for Münzer's conjecture (*RE* XII 400) that he was a new citizen, but Scipio's friendship might well have brought an upstart to the fore.

³⁰ L. Piso C. f. C. n., *cos.* 148 was presumably son

of no. 12, but no. 35 comes too soon to be his son. Q. Piso C. f. C. n., *cos.* 135, can also be a son of no. 12, presumably the youngest, and I have assumed in default of proof that Cn. Piso, *cos.* 139 (no filiation preserved) is another.

³¹ His father was allegedly found later not to have enjoyed citizen status, but the report is full of errors and not credible (W. V. Harris, *Rome in Etruria and Umbria* (1971), 322).

40. 127 L. CORNELIUS CINNA (L. f.)
 41. 125 M. PLAUTIUS HYPSSAEUS (no filiation)
42. 124 C. SEXTIUS CALVINUS (C. f. C. n.)
43. 122 C. Fannius (M. f.)
44. 120 C. Papirius Carbo (C. f.)
45. 118 Q. MARCIUS REX (Q. f. Q. n.)
 46. 116 C. LICINIUS GETHA (P. f.)
 47. 113 Cn. Papirius Carbo (C. f.)
 48. 111 L. CALPURNIUS BESTIA (filiation not recorded)
49. 109 M. IUNIUS SILANUS (D. f. D. n.)
50. 108 —HORTENSIUS (filiation not recorded)
 51. *suff.* M. AURELIUS SCAURUS (filiation not recorded)
52. 107 C. Marius (C. f. C. n.)
 53. 105 P. Rutilius Rufus (P. f.)
54. 105 Cn. Mallius Maximus (Cn. f.)
55. 104 C. Flavius Fimbria (C. f.)
56. 99 M. ANTONIUS (M. f. M. n.)
57. 98 T. Didius (T. f. Sex. n.)
58. 94 C. Coelius Caldus (C. f. C. n.)
 59. 93 M. Herennius (M. f.)
 60. 90 P. Rutilius Lupus (L. f. L. n.)
61. 89 Cn. Pompeius Strabo (Sex. f. Cn. n.)
- abandoned the *cognomen* that recalled the only consul of the line?
 A *novus* unless a patrician.³²
 L. Hypssaei were praetors 189, 139. A moneyer of 60 claims a connection with C. Plautius Decianus, *cos.* 329 (M. H. Crawford, *RRC* no. 420).
 No reason to assume descent from L. Sextius, *cos.* 366, nor from M. Sextius Sabinus, *pr.* 202.
 Not a son of no. 27. C. Fannius C. f. was praetor before 118, ambassador in 113.
 Father, (?) *pr.* 168. No connection with patrician Papirii, see XII.
 See n. 24.
 See VII.
 Brother of no. 44, q.v.
 No known connection with Pisones. Theoretically he could be a grandson or great-grandson of the consul of 180, but would any descendant have dropped the now honorific *cognomen*? Sallust, *Bj* 85, 16 refers to his illustrious ancestors, but in a piece of unreliable rhetoric.
 M. Silanus was *pr.* in 212. But no. 49 was probably of noble blood in Gelzer's sense, see VIII. The chance of D. Silanus M. f. *cos.* 62 being noble is so strong that I have not included him in the list.
 L. Hortensius, *pr.* 170. See n. 27.
 C. Scaurus, *pr.* 186. See VIII.
Parvenu.
 No known connection with Sp. Rutilius Crassus, consular tribune, 417, or P. Rutilius Calvus, *pr.* 166. A C. Rutilius Rufus is attested *c.* 127 (*Div. in Caec.* 69).
 'Ignobilis' (Cic., *Planc.* 12).
 Against *RE* XIV 911 (Münzer) cf. Astin, *Cato*, 1.
 Classed by Cicero as a *parvenu* (XXIII).
 See XII, but cf. n. 5 for possible nobility. Antonii were senators in the second century.
 C. Didius was a senator in 129, but Cicero treats the consul as a *parvenu* (XXIII).
Parvenu (XXIII).
 Of senatorial family, cf. XXIII-V.
 No connection with no. 53, q.v. But senatorial, cf. XXIII-V.
 Perhaps collateral of no. 35, perhaps son of a praetor *c.* 119. Cf. XXIII-V.

³² Mommsen doubted patrician status on the ground that his son's suffect colleague in 86 was a patrician (*Röm. Forsch.* 1 (1864), 114), but legal

niceties would have been disregarded in the 'Cinnae dominatio'.

62.	83	C. Norbanus (filiation not recorded)	Senatorial family? ³³
63.	81	M. Tullius Decula (M. f. A. n.)	Senatorial family (XXIII-V), cf. V.
64.	79	P. SERVILIUS VATIA (C. f. M. n.)	No <i>proof</i> of descent from <i>cos.</i> of 203 or 202, despite Münzer, <i>RE</i> II A. 1811. [See Addendum].
65.	76	C. Scribonius Curio (C. f.)	Praetorian family since at least 193.
66.	72	L. Gellius Publicola (L. f. L. n.)	} Senatorial families (XXIII-V). Cic., <i>Planc.</i> 51 implies that Volcatius had <i>ius imaginum</i> .
67.	66	L. Volcatius Tullus (filiation not recorded)	
68.	63	M. Tullius Cicero (M. f. M. n.)	<i>Parvenu</i> .
69.	62	L. Licinius Murena (L. f. L. n.)	Father, grandfather, and great-grandfather praetors.
70.	60	L. Afranius (A. f.)	Presumably not connected with A. Afranius Stellio (<i>pr.</i> 185). A <i>monetalis</i> (?) S. Afranius <i>c.</i> 150.
71.	59	M. CALPURNIUS BIBULUS (C. f.)	No known connection with Pisones or Bestiae.
72.	58	A. Gabinius (A. f.)	Probably son of a praetor (E. Badian, <i>Philol.</i> 1959, 87 ff.)

XIV. Thus at least 47 *novi*, as defined by Gelzer, became consuls during these 150 years ; more probably 56, since I would also place in the same category 9 of the *incerti* (nos. 5, 28, 39, 42, 46, 48, 50, 56, 71) ; with the latter figure one in five of the 283 men who reached the consulship (including the suffect consulship) was not a noble. The proportion of *novi* falls a little after Sulla, but is significant in every period ; in the last decade of the second century, when Marius held the office six times, nobles could secure only just over half the places. That of course fits Sallust's testimony that the plebs had then become hostile to the nobility and preferred new men, though the well-to-do, whose votes counted most heavily, must also have turned away from the nobility. On the other hand, if Gelzer's definition is correct, Sallust would be misleading in the words so often quoted by those who accept it : ' the nobility used to pass on the consulship from one to another of their own number, and any new man, however distinguished and however remarkable his achievements, was regarded as unworthy of that office, as if he were polluted '.³⁴ This makes much better sense if we follow Mommsen, and it is only then and not on Gelzer's definition, which he adopts, that Syme's statement that ' the *novus homo* was a rare phenomenon at Rome ' is true, since it is known, or can readily be assumed, that many of those so far classed as *novi* were descended from holders of curule offices below the consulship.

XV. We know or can reasonably presume that thirteen of our putative *novi* were of praetorian or aedilician descent (nos. 9, 12, 19, 21, 28, 31, 44, 47, 50, 61, 65, 69, 72). On Mommsen's view they can all be counted *nobiles*. With three exceptions (61, 69, 72) they were descended from men whose praetorship or aedileship is recorded by Livy. Now Livy provides a complete list of praetors (but not of aediles) from 218 to 167. It is only after 70 that our information on elections to these offices ceases to be extremely meagre, and it is obvious that no one who was the first of his line to become praetor or aedile after 70 can have ennobled a consul within our period. We have to fall back on statistical probabilities to assess how many more of our putative *novi* could have been ennobled on Mommsen's view by ancestors who held unrecorded praetorships or aedileships before 218 or after 166.

³³ Though his name may mean ' the man from Norba ' (W. Schulze, *Zur Gesch. lat. Eigennamen* (1904), 532 f.), that does not indicate that he, rather than some ancestor who exercised the *ius migrationis*, was the first to acquire Roman citizenship (*contra* Münzer, *RE* xvii 927). The argument in XXIII that he cannot have been a *parvenu* might perhaps be met by suggesting that Cicero would not have wished to find a precedent for his own rise in that of a man prominent in the discredited régime of Cinna and Carbo.

³⁴ *Bj* 65, 5 (cf. 5, 1) : ' plebs, nobilitate fusa per

legem Mamiliam, novos extollebat ' ; Sallust perhaps had in mind nos. 54 and 55 as well as Marius. In 73, 1 he says that Marius was the first *novus* to be elected ' post multas tempestates '. The list proves that unless he was grossly ignorant he meant *parvenu* and not anyone of non-consular descent by *novus*. There is still some exaggeration, cf. nos. 33 and 36. *Bj* 4, 8 and 85, 2 closely associate praetorship and consulship and 85, 10 and 38 most naturally connect nobility with the *ius imaginum*. Cf. also *Bj* 63, 6 : R. Syme, *Roman Revolution* (1939), 11.

XVI. There was only one praetor from 366 to *c.* 243, two from *c.* 242 to *c.* 228, four from *c.* 227 to 198, and six from 197, save that only four were elected in 179 and 177.³⁵ Between 218 and 166 there were 261 praetors (some held the office twice), and of these 9 new men, not themselves consuls, were certainly or probably ancestors of 11 putative *novi* on our list (nos. 9, 12, 19, 21, 31, 35, 41, 44, 47, 50, 65); hence praetors had a chance rather better than one in thirty of founding a new consular line. Between 165 and 90 there must have been 462 praetors; with a similar success rate they could have founded 15 more consular lines. The time-gap is too short for any consul on my list holding office before L. Piso (no. 35) to have been son of a praetor holding office after 166 (no. 33 is a known *parvenu*), but of those on the list who were consuls after 132 only 8 are known *parvenus* (nos. 36, 37, 52, 54, 55, 57, 58, 68), and 19 could have been descended from praetors (or aediles) who held office after 166 (nos. 38, 39, 42, 43, 46, 48, 53, 56, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 66, 67, 69, 70, 71, 72); it would at least not be statistically improbable that most of them had thus been in Mommsen's sense ennobled.

XVII. By contrast it is not very likely that many of our putative *novi* had ancestors among the praetors before 218. Of the 26 known praetors earlier than 242 no fewer than 21 were also consulars, and the rest (as it happens) all patricians. Moreover at least 11 held the praetorship after the consulship, and iteration occurred. M. Valerius Corvus was consul six times, first in 348, and praetor for the fourth time in 308. It looks as if in this period the single praetor was of virtually the same consequence as the consuls, and that nobility was more likely to be acquired by election to the office in which there were two places to fill. The increase in the number of praetorships did not immediately downgrade the post. In 216 all praetors were ex-consuls, in 215 three, in 214 one. Iteration occurred in these years, and in 213. Admittedly this was a time of crisis, but there are five later instances of re-election in 182, 173 and 172. Moreover, until the number of praetors was raised to six in 197, three out of four of the praetors from 218 were nobles in Gelzer's sense, thereafter only two in three. (The proportion of nobles is naturally somewhat greater on Mommsen's view.) Now from 242 to 219 there were 66 praetorships to be filled, but given the practice of iteration and the preponderance of men of consular families in the praetorian Fasti for the next twenty years, we may doubt if more than two or three progenitors of new consular families made their appearance as praetors, e.g. perhaps the father of the Baebii Tamphili (nos. 10 and 11), or an ancestor of the Annii (nos. 27 and 39). Of the 25 reputed *novi* of the period 199-132 only three are attested *parvenus* (nos. 3, 6 and 33), though others may probably be so classified (nos. 7, 13, 36), and only six (nos. 9, 12, 19, 21, 28, 31) were of known praetorian or aedilician stock. We cannot tell if more qualified by descent from curule aediles, as the relevant Fasti are very fragmentary. That is not very likely for a later period, once there were as many praetorships to be filled as curule and plebeian aedileships taken together, or even more. Nobles are already found as plebeian aediles, and I cannot help wondering whether this office had not come to be regarded as of equal distinction long before Sulla (cf. n. 3). We may guess that the man who was capable of founding a future consular family might bypass the lower office, or (if he held it) would certainly go further. Before 227 the praetorship had been relatively harder to obtain but until 191 the curule aedileship could be held by plebeians only in alternate years. This must have limited the chances of new families to make their mark by election to this office.

XVIII. It also seems to me dubious that strict descent was required for nobility, whether nobility derived from the consulship or from all curule offices. Several of the putative *novi* could be accorded nobility (nos. 8, 11, 32, 35, 47, perhaps 39, 43 and 61), if they won lustre from the consulships of brothers or close collaterals. If praetorships had the same effect, we could conjecture that A. Hostilius Mancinus (no. 16) had been ennobled by a connection (though it is unattested) with earlier praetors of the same *nomen*.

XIX. In any event Mommsen's thesis enables us conjecturally to reduce the number of certain and probable *novi* from 56 to about 20, perhaps fewer, of whom only 12 can certainly or probably be regarded as *parvenus* (nos. 3, 6, 7, 13, 33, 36, 52, 54, 55, 57, 58, 68). Some may have been descended from senators who did not reach the praetorship or aedileship:

³⁵ Mommsen, *StR* II³ 196-9; for Fasti 218-166 see H. H. Scullard, *Roman Politics*² (1973), 306 ff.

they would have counted as *novi* on any view, but might still have enjoyed at the outset more social esteem than a Marius or a Cicero.

XX. The term *nobilis*, which literally meant 'well-known', had certainly acquired the secondary significance of 'aristocratic' in Plautus' time.³⁶ Livy could contrast *nobiles* and *novi* in recounting events of 304, 216 and 184, but we cannot be sure that he employed these terms in a sense other than that which he took to be familiar to his contemporary readers; it is incidentally not that which Gelzer's theory demands.³⁷ In general the exact connotation of *nobilis* in second century texts is unclear, but the *elogium* of C. Cornelius Scipio Hispanus declares: 'stirpem nobilitavit honor' (*ILS* 6). A noble by Gelzer's criteria, he did not rise above the praetorship, and it is his tenure of this office (in 139) that is said to have made his family noble, clearly in the sense that it gave it new lustre. But does this not suggest that the praetorship would also have given a first title to nobility, when held by a member of a family of previously lower status? Afzelius indeed supposed that Mommsen was right on the meaning of *nobilis* in this period, but that it later acquired Gelzer's narrower sense. Another line of argument, which supports the inference from the *elogium*, makes it hard to see how this narrowing could ever have occurred.

XXI. So long as the praetorship was actually held by ex-consuls and was worth holding more than once, it could surely not have been regarded as a notably inferior honour. The fact that men of consular families sought it even before its tenure was a necessary qualification for the consulship suggests the same conclusion. Now iterations still occur at least as late as 172, and it was only after 198 or perhaps 178 that all consuls (unless by special privilege) are ex-praetors.³⁸ Moreover, even when the praetorship had become a step in the *cursus honorum*, rather less than a third of ex-praetors could rise to the consulship (since there were six praetors and a few men held the consulship twice). Fewer than half of all praetors of consular lineage could reach the consulship, in a period when two thirds of all praetors were of this lineage and when some consuls were of non-consular descent. As the Scipionic *elogium* shows, tenure of the praetorship lent new distinction to one of the most aristocratic houses at Rome. This is not surprising. The importance of praetorian jurisdiction in the city is obvious. The urban praetor in the frequent absence of the consuls acted as head of state. In provinces praetors often exercised independent military commands, and could be prorogued as proconsuls: they had the right to triumph. It therefore seems unlikely that even the nobility would have wished to downgrade the office in esteem. The *novi* (in Gelzer's sense) had no reason at all to do so. Though some rose in one or more generations to the consulship, other new families had to be content with praetorian status. Cicero's contemporary, Cn. Tremellius Scrofa, was the seventh praetor of his line.³⁹ Some families that provided praetors in the early second century reached the consulship

³⁶ Gelzer, 49; Strasburger, *RE* xvii 785-89, who follows Münzer in referring Pliny, *NH* xxxiii 17 f. to L. Piso's annals: the election of Cn. Flavius as curule aedile in 304 in preference to sons of consuls led to a demonstration by the 'nobilitas' and not by the whole senate. He compares Livy iv 44, 2 (420 B.C.) where we hear that the plebs preferred as quaestors for their nobility men whose fathers and grandfathers had been consuls. The words italicized show that if any strict definition of nobility were to be found in the text, it would be narrower even than Gelzer's! Both texts show only that consular lineage normally gave an advantage; the nobility even in Mommsen's sense might have resented the choice of an upstart against noble candidates who happened to be of consular birth; in fact until after 227 few would have acquired nobility except through the consulship (XVII).

³⁷ xxii 35, 2 cf. 34, 2-7 (one member of 'a noble family', C. Atilius Serranus, was not necessarily of consular descent); xxxix 40, 3 (plebeians of the most noble families included M. Sempronius Tuditanus, who was perhaps not of consular descent); cf. n. 9; 36. For Livy's identification of patricians (among

whom he doubtless included some persons with doubtful title) with nobles cf. n. 8; *contra* Gelzer (p. 38) this need not show that his usage was inexact.

³⁸ Polyb. vi 53, 7, virtually assimilates the offices. Consuls of 199-7 and perhaps A. Manlius Vulso (*cos.* 178, but cf. *MRR* 1 395) were not praetors before being consuls: see further A. E. Astin, *Collection Latomus* xxxii, 1958, 23 ff.

³⁹ Varro, *RR* ii 4, 2: 'septimus sum deinceps praetorius in gente nostra'. Cf. Münzer, *RE* vi 4 2286 (with my comments in *CR* 1972, 304 ff., 1973, 295). C. Tremellius (with no *cognomen*), perhaps his great-grandfather, was praetor in 170 (?). Cn. Tremellius Flaccus was pr. 202. A Tremellius may have held the office before 218, but we can hardly suppose that it went to a member of the family in seven successive generations, and I would think that Varro is misleadingly expressing the fact that there had been six earlier praetors who were ancestors or collaterals of his contemporary. I take Flaccus to be a collateral of the agronomist because of his *cognomen*. That man's grandfather first took the *cognomen* Scrofa.

only after 49; ⁴⁰ most never did so. But if the increase in the number of praetorships did not in itself deprive the office of that esteem which it clearly possessed until 242, it is hard to see when, how and with what effect it lost prestige. If, for instance, the Tremellii were looked on as nobles, at the time they first reached the praetorship, presumably in 202, how could a conception have won acceptance under which they ceased to enjoy the appellation? This makes it hard to follow Afzelius in supposing that the conception changed. He observed that in Cicero's time the circle from which consuls were drawn had become more exclusive. That seems to be true. If we divide our period into five sections each of thirty years, we find that 11 of our *novi* were consuls from 199 to 170, 12 from 169 to 140, 12 from 139 to 110, 13 from 109 to 80 and 8 from 79 to 50.⁴¹ But it clearly does not follow that the conception of nobility had become more exclusive. No doubt there were always gradations within the nobility. Even among consular families the great patrician houses, and indeed plebeians who could trace their dignity back to the fourth century,⁴² must have thought that their dignity exceeded that of the descendants of a Flaminius or Terentius Varro, whose lineage was far more recent and who could not produce more than a single consulship after that of the founder of their fame.⁴³ One branch of the Fulvii actually took the *cognomen* Nobilior. Cicero can speak of 'summa nobilitas' and the like. A Duke is better than a Baron. The question is: what was the minimum requirement for nobility?

XXII. For Mommsen it was the *ius imaginum*, which brings in the curule aedileship as well as the praetorship. The language of Sallust affords some support. Marius decries the typical noble as 'hominem veteris prosapiae ac multarum imaginum et nullius stipendi' (*By* 85, 10) and refers to the 'imagines' of the nobility (*ib.* 38). But the crucial evidence is Cicero's, and it does not altogether suit Gelzer's interpretation.

XXIII. Addressing the people in 63, Cicero says: 'Me perlongo intervallo prope memoriae temporumque nostrorum primum hominem novum consulem fecistis' (*de leg. agr.* II 3). In *pro Murena* 17 he compares his success with that of other 'homines novi', M'. Curius, the first and only consul (290) of his line, Cato (195), Q. Pompeius (141), and among more recent figures, Marius (107), T. Didius (98) and C. Coelius Caldus (94); all but Curius and Didius appear in a similar catalogue in the *Verrines* (II 5, 181), where the name of C. Flavius Fimbria (104) is added (*cf. Planc.* 12). It is of course well known that Cato and Marius were, like Cicero, men of non-senatorial family; Pompeius too was 'homo per se cognitus sine ulla maiorum commendatione' (*Brut.* 96), 'humili et obscuro loco natus' (*Verr.*, *loc. cit.*). No one doubts that all the *novi* listed were in the same category. Cicero was by his account the first *novus* to be elected in living memory, i.e. since Coelius (*cf. Comm. Pet.* 11). But, as Gelzer noted, eight other men of non-consular descent had been returned in the intervening years. None of them can have been *novi* in the same sense. M. Herennius (93) was of a family that is known to have had senators in previous generations, Cn. Pompeius Strabo (89) was probably son of a praetor, who governed Macedonia about 119, and C. Scribonius Curio (76) was surely descended from a praetor of 193; his father had all but attained the consulship (*Brut.* 124). Evidently it is only the meagreness of our records that prevents us from documenting the senatorial ancestry of the rest.

XXIV. In these texts a 'homo novus' is for Cicero an outright *parvenu*. He uses the term more than once of such men, if they merely entered the senate or held minor offices.⁴⁴ He twice refers to Cn. Octavius (*cos.* 165) as the first consul of his line (*Phil.* IX 4; *Offic.* I

⁴⁰ C. Caninius Rebilus, *cos. suff.* 45 (*pr.* 171); C. Fonteius Capito, *cos. suff.* 33 (*pr.* 169); C. Memmius, *cos. suff.* 34 (*pr.* 172); L. Scribonius Libo, *cos.* 34 (praetors, 204, 192).

⁴¹ For comparison 5 new plebeian *nomina* appear in the *Fasti* 229-200 (when frequent iterations made the consulship especially hard to obtain), 6 in 259-230, 8 in 289-260, 7 in 319-290, 11 in 349-320, and 7 in 366-350. Claudii Marcelli and Claudii Caninae are counted separately. The comparison is not *in pari materia*, since there were far more *novi homines* than *nova nomina*, *cf.* IV.

⁴² The plebeian *nomina* represented before 300 and notable after 200 are in order of appearance

Licinii, Popillii, Marcii, Aelii, Atilii, Domitii, Claudii Marcelli, Iunii, Fulvii, Minucii, Sempronii, Livii, though not all subsequent bearers of these *nomina* should be assumed to have been of the same lines.

⁴³ C. Flaminius, *cos.* 223, was father of his namesake, *cos.* 187, and M. Terentius Varro Lucullus, *cos.* 73, had perhaps been adopted by a descendant of C. Terentius Varro, *cos.* 216. There were Flamini and of course other *Varrones* in Cicero's time.

⁴⁴ Gelzer, 34. He makes Cicero apply it to equestrian *iudices*, by an astounding misinterpretation of *Verr.* II 2, 175.

138). It would be a *petitio principii* to assert that he is thus asserting the *novitas* of Octavius, who was son of a praetor (205). The first allusion takes us no further. Cicero had proposed that a statue be erected in honour of Ser. Sulpicius: it was objected that no precedent justified the honour, and Cicero cites the erection of a statue to Octavius: 'nemo tum novitati invidēbat; nemo virtutem non honorabat', i.e. 'no one then begrudged the novelty (of the memorial); no one withheld honour from *virtus*'.⁴⁵ But in the second text he certainly classes Octavius as a *novus*. The context is probably significant. He was referring to Octavius' purchase of a house on the Palatine to enhance his dignity. Now in 62 he himself had acquired a mansion in that exclusive district for the same reason (*Att.* I 13, 5); and evidently there was criticism of the upstart social climber (cf. *Ps.-Sall., in Cic.* 2), which he answered by claiming that he had bought the house for the convenience of his clients (*Plut., Cic.* 8); in *de Officiis* he has the same defence in mind when prescribing that a magnate's house must provide spacious accommodation for visitors. But he is also perhaps suggesting that he had a good precedent in the action of Octavius, and for this purpose makes him out to be as much of a *parvenu* as he was himself. In any case did he know that Octavius was son of a praetor? I doubt if this text justified Gelzer in supposing that Octavius was naturally classed as a *novus*. Gelzer's list of *novi* includes only one other man of praetorian descent, L. Mummius (*cos.* 146), whom Valerius Maximus (VI 4, 2) calls a *nobilis*, wrongly in Gelzer's view. Gelzer relies on Velleius (II 128), giving a list of *novi*, of whom all the rest were mere *parveneri*, who like Sejanus rose by their virtues, viz. Sp. Carvilius (*cos.* 293) and Ti. Coruncanianus (*cos.* 280), Cato, Marius and Cicero. Velleius was obviously unaware that Mummius' father had been praetor. Why then should we not accept Valerius Maximus' estimate of Mummius' standing with all its implications? XXV. 'Homo novus' is then applied properly only to men of non-senatorial descent.⁴⁶ If that is its meaning, then on either Gelzer's view or Mommsen's there is a larger or smaller limbo of senators who are neither *nobiles* nor *novi*. Asconius distinguishes among Cicero's rivals for the consulship between nobles and men who were not the first of their family to hold office (p. 82 C); the last phrase does not of course imply that they were descended from praetors or curule aediles and thus does not invalidate Mommsen's thesis. Still, the limbo could in principle contain all of non-consular lineage. But Cicero again seems to exclude this possibility. By his own election, he tells the people, 'eum locum quem nobilitas praesidiis firmatum atque omni ratione obvallatum tenebat me duce rescidistis' (*de leg. agr.* II 3). After a long interval he had broken down 'claustra ista nobilitatis' (*Mur.* 17). Cicero seems to be claiming not only that he is the first *novus* since Coelius in 94 to have become consul, but that all the consuls in the intervening years had been nobles. Yet on Gelzer's view this was not true of eight of them. No difficulty, however, arises if Mommsen is right: though only two of the eight are attested as possessing the *ius imaginum* (XXIII), there is no statistical implausibility in assuming that the other six had the same right (XVI).

XXVI. Turn now to Gelzer's list of attested *nobiles*. He himself admits one anomaly. It includes C. Papirius Carbo (*cos.* 120), who was of praetorian stock, and not noble by Gelzer's definition. It is just conceivable, but not likely, that Cicero in calling him noble did not at the time of writing *de oratore* III 74 realize that he was not descended from the patrician Papirii, as he later did. Gelzer does not seek this line of escape. He says that 'Cicero gives us specific proof that this *gens* [Papiria] was regarded as a single unit'. I draw quite the contrary conclusion from Cicero's letter to Papirius Paetus (n. 13), on which Gelzer relies. But even if Gelzer is right here, he has in fact abandoned his own

⁴⁵ For 'novitas' in this sense cf. *Verr.* II 1, 125; *Prov. Cons.* 27; 'novus' is common.

⁴⁶ Livy applies the term to the first plebeian consul (VII 1, 1) and to Cato (XXXIX 41, 2), manifest upstarts, also to C. Terentius Varro (XXII 34, 7) and M'. Acilius Glabrio (XXXVII 57, 12), who can readily be so classed; the objections of the nobility to Glabrio's election as censor are exactly parallel to their opposition to Cato's. *Comm. Pet.* 13 contrasts

men of consular families with 'novos homines praetorios', but the last phrase can only mean 'new men who have held the praetorship', not 'new men of praetorian ancestry'. The suggestion of Strasburger (*RE* XVII 1224) that nobles extended the term more widely than others would do has no support in the evidence. Gelzer himself later defined *homo novus* as the first of a family to hold public office (*Kl. Schr.* I 163, 187).

criterion of nobility, strict descent from consulars, for another: membership of a *gens* which had provided consuls. (His reference to Carbo's 'reditus ad bonos' (*Leg.* III 35) is totally irrelevant: the distinction between *boni* and *populares* has nothing to do with lineage.) Gelzer's list also includes other names, the Aelii Tuberones and Iuventius Laterensis, perhaps that of Q. Hortensius (n. 27), whose descent from consuls is not attested but simply inferred from the fact that they are called noble. But the Tuberones and Hortensius were at least of praetorian descent. As for Laterensis, Gelzer just assumes his descent from M'. Iuventius Thalna (no. 21), the only consul of this *nomen*, though the difference in *cognomen* might arouse doubts; it is perhaps significant that Laterensis based his claim to be superior in birth to the *parvenu* Plancius on his *imagines* and the rank of his father, who cannot have risen above the praetorship (*Planc.* 18; 50 f.). It is true that 55 out of 59 names on Gelzer's list unquestionably fit his definition of nobility. That is perhaps not very surprising, since the more eminent of the nobles even on Mommsen's view, and perhaps the greater number, would be of consular descent. Moreover, the list takes no account of a passage, which Gelzer cites later, in which Cicero in enumerating those who helped to suppress Saturninus appears to classify as nobles C. Scribonius Curio (*cos.* 76) and 'all the Pompeii'.⁴⁷ In effect Gelzer concedes that Curio is an exception to his rule, though his praetorian lineage only went back one generation beyond Murena's (*infra*) and was no more distinguished than that of Tremellius Scrofa. Gelzer does not even notice the allusion to the Pompeii, yet it is not plausible to suppose that, speaking in 63, Cicero meant to include only the descendants of the consul of 141 and to exclude the father of Pompey, who was of merely praetorian descent. The truth is surely that 'nobility' here has not for Cicero the rigid sense that Gelzer imposes.

XXVII. Cicero normally has some particular reason for referring to nobility of birth, and it is not very significant if he generally happens to ascribe it to men of consular descent, unless he also denies it to those of praetorian. Gelzer thought that he did implicitly deny it to two such men, Fonteius and Murena. There is no extant allusion to the nobility of either in his speeches defending them. Gelzer might have added that he did refer to the nobility of other aristocrats he spoke for, P. Sulla, L. Flaccus and M. Marcellus. These references, however, are incidental and unemphatic; they do not come in his perorations; we cannot exclude the possibility that Fonteius was so described in a lost part of the speech in his defence. Cicero does speak of Fonteius' family as ancient and of its numerous praetorships in the peroration (41). So too in the peroration of his defence of Sulla he merely alludes to Sulla's 'genus' and 'nomen' and to the 'maiorum imagines' (88), and at the end of his speech for Flaccus to Flaccus' ancestors (101), his 'generis dignitas' (104) and the 'nomen clarissimum et fortissimum vel generis vel vetustatis vel hominis' (106), but makes no specific mention of 'nobility'. It is very rash to draw inferences from Cicero's non-use of terms. Consider *Quinct.* 72: 'pro me pugnabit L. Philippus, eloquentia, gravitate, honore florentissimus civitatis; dicet Hortensius, excellens ingenio, nobilitate, existimatione; aderunt autem homines nobilissimi ac potentissimi.' If Philippus were not of known consular descent, and this text stood alone, would it not be cited to show that, eminent as he was, Cicero could not credit him with 'nobilitas'? In fact Philippus was a man of 'the highest nobility' (*Brut.* 166). So when Cicero says (*Mur.* 36): 'quis L. Philippum summo ingenio, opera, gratia, nobilitate a M. Herennio superari posse arbitratus est?', this need only mean that Philippus' nobility exceeded that of Herennius (no. 59), as on any view it did.

XXVIII. As for Murena, Cicero addresses Sulpicius: 'contempsisti L. Murenae genus, extulisti tuum' (*Mur.* 15). What had Sulpicius actually said? Cicero proceeds: *if* you, Sulpicius, are assuming that only patricians are of good birth, you will make another secession of the plebs necessary. Plainly Sulpicius had not suggested that, but he had evidently stressed his own patrician birth.⁴⁸ Could he not have simply maintained that as

⁴⁷ *Rab. perd.* 21: 'cum . . . cuncta nobilitas ac iuventus accurreret, Cn. et L. Domitii, L. Crassus, Q. Mucius, C. Claudius, M. Drusus, cum omnes Octavii, Metelli, Iulii, Cassii, Catones, Pompeii, cum . . . hic Q. Catulus, admodum tum adulescens, cum hic C. Curio, cum denique omnes clarissimi

viri cum consulibus essent'. He had previously named consulars of the time and then singles out other notables and members of great houses, ending with the two survivors, Catulus and Curio, who were present when he was speaking.

⁴⁸ For a parallel cf. Cic., *Sull.* 23.

a descendant of patricians, who had held the highest office in the fifth century, he was far superior in lineage to a man whose ancestors had not gone further than the praetorship, without actually denying that Murena too was a noble? In answering him, Cicero might be thought indeed to be suggesting that Murena did have a title to nobility: the word order in the opening sentences of §16 (*tua vero nobilitas, tametsi summa est . . . memoria est nobilitatis tuae*) seems to stress Sulpicius' nobility in contradistinction to what might seem to be the lesser nobility of Murena. Cicero cannot of course gainsay the facts on which Sulpicius relied, but he argues that from a different standpoint Murena's lineage was more distinguished than that of Sulpicius: over the last few generations his family, with four successive praetors, had done better than that of Sulpicius, who had, almost like a new man, raised himself from relative obscurity. This was a far more telling reply than a bald statement that Murena too could be described as noble. It is surely Cicero's *amour propre* that then makes him complicate his reply by saying that after his own rise to the consulship he did not expect to hear any more slurs on a man's 'ignoble' origins; this implies, not that Murena was ignoble, but that if a *parvenu* could gain the consulship, *a fortiori* no objection could be raised to one of praetorian descent. Perhaps Gelzer's attempt to restrict the range of nobility provides the most natural interpretation of this passage, if it stood alone, but it is not the inevitable interpretation, and we should do well to discard it, if other considerations make Mommsen's hypothesis preferable.⁴⁹

XXIX. Gelzer (p. 32) also cites *Philippics* III 15, where we read that Antony cast a slur on the 'ignobilitas' of Octavian. Cicero treats this as absurd, since (to say nothing of Octavian's adoption by Caesar) his natural father, who was admittedly a *parvenu* and was praetor in 61, would have become consul but for his early death. But we must not too hastily infer that Antony had imputed lack of nobility to a man who had no consul among his ancestors by birth. To judge from Cicero's reply, what allegedly demeaned Octavian was rather the fact that his mother came from Aricia; this is the matter on which Cicero enlarges. Again Gelzer's reading of the passage may be the most natural, but it is not conclusive. Against it we must set the necessary implication of Cicero's claims that he was the first *novus* for a generation to have broken through the barriers of the nobility, the difficulties that Gelzer's list of *nobiles* presents for his own theory, the objections to the downgrading of the praetorship that it demands, and the impossibility of reconciling Sallust's language with the great number of *novi*, as defined by Gelzer, who in fact reached the consulship. All these considerations make Mommsen's view far preferable.

XXX. In any event the questions what *nobilis* meant, or *novus*, are essentially philological. For the historian it is more vital to determine the precise extent to which the Roman aristocracy was exclusive. Within the senate the consulars normally enjoyed most authority. Hence access to the consulship mattered most. On any view *parvenus* seldom rose to it in the middle and late Republic, whereas they could more easily obtain the praetorship and other lower magistracies (Cic., *Planc.* 60; Sallust, *Bj* 63, 6), and most consuls were of consular descent. The resulting dominance of this class no doubt meant that it lent a tone to the aristocracy as a whole: men of less distinguished family would assimilate themselves to those of the most ancient lineage. None the less, the scions of old praetorian houses could also make a justified claim to 'magna dignitas generis' (*Mur.* 18).

XXXI. Modern accounts in my view create a false impression of aristocratic exclusiveness in three ways. (1) They slur over the fact that one in every five or six consuls was not in fact of consular descent, and that it was probably only the true upstarts who were 'polluted'. (2) They illustrate the hereditary strength of great houses by enumerating the number of consulships obtained by whole *gentes*,⁵⁰ whereas in reality different families within a *gens*

⁴⁹ Strasburger (*RE* XVII 787) thought that nobility had an (improperly) wide extension in *Rosc. Am.* 135 ff.; *Cluent.* 153; *de Orat.* II 199, but the texts

are very vague.

⁵⁰ e.g. H. H. Scullard, *op. cit.* (n. 35), 11.

may never have been connected by descent from a common ancestor,⁵¹ or, when such a relationship existed or was believed to have existed, it could be remote in time. (The common assumption, which I think precarious, that kindred tended to act together politically is particularly questionable in such cases.) (3) Though they are right in stressing the electoral preponderance of consular families, they do not bring out the truth that few of them enjoyed an unbroken and permanent hold over the highest offices. The success of the senior line of the Claudii Pulchri in every generation of the Republic was exceptional (see Münzer's *stemma* in *RE* III 2665): contrast the fortunes of the Claudii Nerones with no consul between 204 and 13, when the future emperor Tiberius was elected. Before 200 the Fabii might be reckoned the most powerful of the patrician *gentes*; thereafter the dynasty, preserved from extinction by adoptions, registered no consul between 116 and 45. Among the plebeian nobility the Atilii furnished eight consuls from 335 to 217, then only three more; the Fulvii seventeen in all, but none after 125. It was an unequalled achievement of the Caecilii Metelli to fill fifteen consulships between 143 and 52; previously only three of them had held the office (284, 251, 205). Long intervals often punctuate the success of some families, e.g. the Claudii Marcelli (331, 287, 222, 196, 183, 166, 51, 50, 49, 22), or to take more extreme instances, the Domitii Calvini (332, 283, 53), the Lutatii Catuli (242, 220, 102, 78), the Popillii Laenates (359, 316, 173, 172, 139, 132) and probably the Plautii (consuls in 358, 347, 330, 329, 328, 318, 125, and perhaps some consuls in the first century A.D.). Of the patricians the Iulii figured fairly often in the Fasti before 366; then only two in two centuries (267, 157), followed by the pairs (distant cousins) of 91 and 90, 64 and 59.⁵²

XXXII. Long-lasting plebeian dynasties were the exception rather than the rule. Of 53 plebeian *nomina* found in the consular Fasti from 366 to 200,⁵³ 19 appear but once in these years, and of these 19 only 7 recur after 200.⁵⁴ No more than 8 of the 53 *nomina* are represented by four or more consuls down to 200; of these the Genucii had already disappeared (consuls in 365, 363, 303, 276, 271), and the Atilii, Fulvii and Sempronii provided no more consuls after the second century.⁵⁵ Particular families, marked by differences of *cognomen*, are still more ephemeral; of four branches of the Atilii only one registered consuls after 200. As for the *novi* within the period 199–50, Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus (191) was the progenitor of five Republican consuls, Cn. Octavius (165) of four, M. Porcius Cato (195) of three, and six later Calpurnii Pisones no doubt traced their descent to the collaterals of 180 and 133, but no fewer than 27 out of 57 were the sole consuls of their line. Many of the families concerned are unattested from Cicero's lifetime and later.⁵⁶ It needed outstanding ability or luck not only to reach the top but to stay there.

XXXIII. Some families of course died out. We can hardly tell how often this happened. The exceptional qualities of a Scaurus (n. 18), a Ser. Sulpicius (n. 7) and even a Catiline (n. 22), or the patronage of Augustus⁵⁷ might resurrect lines we should otherwise suppose extinct. Who would have thought that the Pinarii, with consuls only in 489 and 472, and (so far as we know) praetors only in 349 (?) and 161, still survived in Cicero's time, but that he mentions a pontifex from that patrician clan (*Dom.* 118)? Similarly in his day Fulvii

⁵¹ cf. V–IX, especially nn. 17 and 24. The Cornelii, with far more consuls than any other *gens*, should be considered family by family (cf. n. 16). The Cethegi produced consuls in 204, 197, 181, 160 and not again until A.D. 24. The success of the Dolabellae was intermittent (283, 159, 81, 44, A.D. 10). L. Scipio, *cos.* 190, had only one consular descendant (*cos.* 83). The interval between Sulla and his latest consular ancestor, P. Rufinus (290) is well-known. Merulae appear only in 193 and 87, the Cinnae (if patrician, cf. n. 32) not before 127. The Sisennae (perhaps not patrician) never had a consul.

⁵² No doubt some gaps can be explained by the assumption that for several generations no member of a family lived to consular age, but the instances are far too numerous to make this explanation generally acceptable; on occasions we know that it does not apply; for instance P. and Ser. Sulpicius Galba were defeated in the consular elections of 64 and 50, and the son of the latter could also not rise

beyond the praetorship (Suet., *Galba* 3), so that no member of this patrician house was consul between 108 B.C. and A.D. 22.

⁵³ I include Hortensius, *dict.* 287, and count the Claudii Caninae and Marcelli separately.

⁵⁴ I doubt if the Sextii, Appuleii, Aquillii, Hortensii were related to later Republican bearers of the *nomina*. Cf. also nn. 42 and 43.

⁵⁵ The Iunii, Licinii, Marcii and perhaps the Plautii lasted on.

⁵⁶ The Villii Tappuli, Laelii, Porcii Licini, Baebii Tamphili, Petillii Spurini, Hostilii Mancini, Anicii Galli, Acilii Balbi, Sextii Calvini, Licinii Gethae, Rutilii Rufi, Mallii Maximi, Flavii Fimbriae, have all vanished.

⁵⁷ Quinctii Crispini (*cos.* 9; *cos. suff.* A.D. 2); M. Furius Camillus (*cos.* A.D. 8); Q. Sulpicius Camerinus (*cos.* A.D. 9), all patricians. Doubts on the lineage of such persons are unnecessary in the light of Ciceronian parallels.

and Popillii were still to be found, but not in the higher ranks of the senate. Sempronii Gracchi, presumably descended from the consul of 215, and not from his collateral, consul in 177, turn up in the early Principate (Tac., *Ann.* I 53; IV 13). The decay or extinction of old noble families made way for new. Evidently distinction of birth was not enough to maintain political eminence. Wealth was perhaps hardly less important.⁵⁸ The political fortunes of families may often have altered with changes in their material resources. It may be no accident that Cato, one of the few *novi* after 199 to found a powerful and enduring noble house, devoted much of his talent and energy to making money. A political career might enable a noble who was already rich to conserve and augment his wealth, though it might also tempt him to extravagance that would set his family on a course of decline which was perhaps reversed only in rare instances.

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ADDENDUM

Mr Crawford points out to me that, if the argument in *RRC* I, p. 81 is correct, it does furnish proof of P. Servilius Vatia's patrician descent; his name should then be eliminated from the list in XIII (no. 64).

⁵⁸ Brunt, *Latomus* 1975, 619 ff. on the Ahenobarbi and Metelli.