

## rattus

Knobloch has offered a brilliant explanation (RhM 115, 1972, 291-2) of this old puzzle. This note is simply to suggest that by considering one additional factor Knobloch's explanation may be further simplified, and its regularity increased.

His crucial observation is the entry *raturus* · *raet* in an Old English glossary, which he analyzes with great insight as containing - ουροσ 'tailed'. This would then be a specialist technical term in origin, *rat-ūrus*, with the first element from *rado* -*ere*. *rattus* would be derived with folk gemination. It is the last step for which I would offer a more regular derivation.

If we note such forms as *\*raditāre* and *\*raditūra* ( > *rature* etc.), which are adduced by Knobloch, we may easily expect a syncope form *\*rad(i)t-ūrus* > *\*rattūrus*. But this then would have the appearance of being a future participle, as long as the source semantics were still perceived<sup>1</sup>). Therefore, to "restores" the original force of the description of the tail, the expected past participle was back-formed<sup>2</sup>). Thus we arrive by regular morphology, with no semantic increment, at *rattus*.

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1) On such future active participles with inserted vowel, see Sommer *Handbuch der lateinischen Laut- und Formenlehre* 649 § 390, e.g. *mortuos*: *mori-tūrus*, *partus*: *pariitūrus*; the active meaning of this form has also led to morphology based on the present stem, thereby *iuvatūrus*, *nascitūrus*.

2) On the expansion of *-itus* (: *-tus*, *-sus*) in such forms see Sommer 648 § 389, 4 c, and for early examples cf. *adgretus* *egretus* = *-grētītus* < *-greditus*.