

L. VERGINIUS RUFUS AND THE FOUR EMPERORS*

To inquire now into the years of crisis, A. D. 68–9, is to have the advantage of being able to consult the distinguished work done on them by the last generation of scholars¹). There is a corresponding disadvantage: one cannot hope to achieve anything more than a judicious synthesis or a restatement of views that have been neglected. I am conscious of many obligations, whether I have followed a scholar's opinions or whether they have provoked me to doubt or denial: *quos omnes honoris causa nomino*.

Despite this work, much remains uncertain about the rising of Julius Vindex, governor of one of the Gauls, probably of Lugdunensis, possibly of Belgica²), against the Emperor Nero in

*) I should like to express my gratitude to the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies for the opportunity of reading a version of this paper to the Society in November 1977.

1) There are too many works for them all to be mentioned in a bibliographical note; but I shall refer to the following only by author's name and (where necessary to distinguish one publication from another) date: C. M. Kraay, *The Coinage of Vindex and Galba*, A. D. 68, and the Continuity of the Augustan Principate, *Num. Chron.* Ser. vi, Vol. ix 1949, 129 ff.; G. E. F. Chilver, *The Army in Politics*, A. D. 68–70, *JRS* xlvii 1957, 29 ff.; R. Syme, *Tacitus*, 2 vols., Oxford, 1958; M. Raoss, *La Rivolta di Vindice ed il Successo di Galba*, *Epigr.* xx 1958, 46 ff.; xx 1960, 37 ff.; P. A. Brunt, *The Revolt of Vindex and the Fall of Nero*, *Lat.* xviii 1959, 531 ff.; G. B. Townend, *The Reputation of Verginius Rufus*, *Lat.* xx 1961, 337 ff.; J. B. Hainsworth, *Verginius and Vindex*, *Hist.* xi 1962, 86 ff.; D. C. A. Shotter, *Tacitus and Verginius Rufus*, *CQ*, N. S. xvii 1967, 370 ff.; *A Time-Table for the Bellum Neronis*, *Hist.* xxiv 1975, 59 ff.; L. J. Daly, *Verginius at Vesontio: The Incongruity of the Bellum Neronis*, *Hist.* xxiv 1975, 75 ff. References to Tacitus are to the *Historiae* except where another work is specified; the abbreviation "B", with a page number, indicates the third volume of Boissvain's edition of Dio, unless another volume is cited.

2) Lugdunensis is generally accepted, e. g., by Brunt, 536, and (without hesitation) by H. Grassl, *Untersuchungen zum Vierkaiserjahr 68/69 n. Chr. Ein Beitrag zur Ideologie und Sozialstruktur des frühen Prinzipats*, Vienna, 1973, 48. The governor of Aquitania was hostile to him (Suet., *Galba* 9.2; *legato Aquitaniae auxilia implorante*, which is incorrectly interpreted by Raoss (1960), 81, and by Shotter (1975), 62, as a request for help for Vindex; why should the supporter's letter arrive before that of his principal? Grassl, *op. cit.* 57, n. 1, is correct). Brunt suggests that he may be the Betuus Cilo of Tac., i.37.3, whom G. Alföldy, *Fasti Hispanienses*, Wiesbaden, 1969, 156, n. 32, takes to be of equestrian standing. The

spring 68. And much of the uncertainty centres on the figure of L. Verginius Rufus, who at that time was commander of the Upper Rhine army, three legions stationed at Moguntiacum and Vindonissa, with their *auxilia*³). These are some of the problems that Verginius' activity (or inactivity) has raised: did he delay unduly before taking action against Vindex⁴? If so, was it because he was in sympathy or even in negotiation with the rebel⁵? It is true, as

sources' silence about the conduct of the governor of Lugdunensis during the revolt (when Vindex was besieging his capital), tells both against Belgica (which Brunt excludes because of the course of the war) and against Narbonensis (proposed by B. H. Warmington, *Nero: Reality and Legend*, London, 1969, 158), which seems also to be excluded by the coin legend TRES GALLIAE (R.I.C. I, 210, no. 110; C.R.E.B.M. I, ccxi, 346 f., nos. 211 ff.). For the participation of Belgae in the revolt, see Raoss (1960), 80. Philostratus, *Vit. Ap.* v. 10, says that Apollonius ξυνέταττε τῷ Βίνδικι ὄμορον ἄρχοντα, who turns out to be τοῦ τὴν Βαυτικὴν ἐπιτροπεύοντος. Hainsworth, 67, thinks that Galba is meant; Shotter (1975), 62 f., like Grassl, *op. cit.* 91, prefers the procurator of Baetica, but Vindex is unlikely to have been allied with any procurator (see below, 330); even the quaestor A. Caecina Alienus cannot be ruled out (cf. Tac. i.53.2); but the passage could be a garbled reference to the governor of Belgica, which adjoined Lugdunensis.

3) IV Macedonica (Moguntiacum), XXI Rapax (Vindonissa), XXII Primi-genia (Moguntiacum): M. Parker, *The Roman Legions*, Oxford, 1928, 131, 140; for the *auxilia*, see G. L. Cheesman, *The Auxilia of the Roman Imperial Army*, Oxford, 1914, 68 f.; see also P. A. Brunt, *Tacitus on the Batavian Revolt*, *Lat.* xix 1960, 494 ff.

4) The view that the battle of Vesontio was unduly delayed is taken by B. H. Warmington, *Nero*, 160 (Vesontio invested at the beginning of May at earliest); by Hainsworth, 86 ff. (*at the very end of May, if not in early June* [12 June]). Even Chilver, 32, while conceding that the first week in June (Kraay, 129, n. 5) is too late for Vesontio, admits that the evidence suggests that Nero's death followed closely on the battle. Kraay's reasons, 129, n. 5, for accepting the late date are that Nero could not have heard of the battle and still killed himself and that the "contemplation" by Galba that followed news of Vindex's death should not have been prolonged. But the victory at Vesontio may have been overshadowed by later bad news. Mattingly, *Num. Chron.*, Ser. VI, Vol. xiv 1954, 37 f., gives all the reasons for an early date – and decides for about the end of May. *Contra*, Shotter (1975), 73 (28 April).

5) So Brunt, 537 ff. Hainsworth, 89, and G & R xi 1964, 133, also finds Verginius disloyal, as does Daly, 82 ff., who insists that Verginius played a decisive part in Nero's downfall (making it difficult to understand Galba's attitude towards him). Warmington, *op. cit.* (n. 4) 160, has Verginius temporizing to see whether Vindex's movement looked like succeeding; cf. Shotter (1975), 66, "private revolt"; he had previously argued (1967), 373 ff., that Verginius, though at first interested in Vindex's movement, was so affected by Vesontio that he decided to ride out events; he had mobilized ostensibly to deal with Vindex and the legions thought that they were marching in the name of Nero; Verginius looked as if he were loyal until news of the defection of "other armies", which must be the German armies, reached Nero on 8 June.

Xiphilinus and John of Antioch state, that he and Vindex met privately and came to an agreement before the battle of Vesontio at which Vindex's movement was crushed, so that (as Plutarch also holds) the battle was no more than a dreadful accident, brought about by the greed or by the misguided fury of the Rhine legions⁶)? How early in these proceedings did Verginius' troops hail him *imperator*⁷)? Did he have designs on the Principate – Tacitus claims not to know – or was he, however reluctantly, loyal to Nero throughout⁸)?

To answer these questions is to do more than to pass judgment on a prominent Roman senator (a judgment which some have suspected that Tacitus shrank from making⁹)); it means adopting a certain view of Vindex's revolt and its importance, reconsidering the spectrum of senatorial attitudes towards the Principate, and asking how the events of 68–9 came to be reported as they are by the writers whose accounts are preserved to us: Tacitus, Suetonius, Plutarch, and Dio.

6) Dio (Xiph.) lxxiii.24.2 = B 87: τοῦ δὲ Οὐίνδικος . . . οὐ πρόρω στρατο-πεδεύσαντος ἀντεπέσειλαν μὲν ἀλλήλοις τινά, καὶ τέλος καὶ ἐς λόγους ἦλθον μόνοι καὶ (μηδενός) σφισι τῶν ἄλλων παρόντος, καὶ κατὰ τοῦ Νέρωνος, ὡς εἰκάζετο, συνέθεντο πρὸς ἀλλήλους (the story of the accidental battle follows); cf. John Ant., Fr. 91 Muell. v. 10–22 (with details of the agreement); also Plut., *Galba* 6.3. The story is accepted by Brunt, 538 f.; Hainsworth, 95; Daly, 90 (“miscarriage”); J. Nicols, *Vespasian and the Partes Flavianae*, *Historia Einzelschriften* 28, Wiesbaden, 1978, 53; cf. F. R. B. Godolphin, *AJP* lvi 1935, 328.

7) Dio (Xiph.) lxxiii.25.1 f. = B 88 has Verginius saluted after the battle; John Ant., loc. cit., considers that it was ζήλω . . . τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν δυναστείας that made his troops attack Vindex; Plut., *Galba* 6.1, implies frequent salutations before the battle; but Tac., i.8.2, says that *Germanici exercitus . . . tarde a Nerone desciverant*. H. M. Last, *JRS* xvi 1926, 124, considers that *the legions of the Rhine did not throw off their allegiance until the challenge of Galba had brought the throne into the open market*; Warmington, op. cit. (n. 4) 182, thinks the offers made only after news of Nero's death reached the Rhineland.

8) Tac., i.8.2: *an imperare noluisse dubium: delatum ei a milite imperium conveniebat* (*voluisse*, Koestermann, comparing the confusion of n and v in iv.58.2 and 77.3; but what was uncertain was whether he refused because he did not want the empire or for some other reason; *{haud} conveniebat* Gudeman, comparing Dio lxxiii.25.3 and destroying the balance of the sentence). Chilver, 32 f., and Syme, 179, are firm for Verginius' loyalty; so too most recently Grassl, op. cit. (n. 2), 56 f.

9) For the view that Tacitus opened his *Historiae* on 1 January, 69, partly because Verginius' conduct would not bear examination, see Hainsworth, 88, elaborated in *G & R* xi 1964, 128 ff.; *contra*, Shotton, *CQ*, N. S. xvii 1967, 158 ff.; Syme, 154 f., calls 1 January vital and inescapable. For earlier discussion see Chilver, 29, n. 6.

P. A. Brunt's impeccable analysis¹⁰⁾ of Vindex's reasons for rebelling against Nero make it unnecessary to dwell on them. Vindex was neither a Gallic nationalist nor an old-fashioned Republican, as was once supposed, but a Roman senator outraged by Nero's rapacity towards the provincials and by his debauchery – two aspects of Nero's conduct that were connected, as Brunt points out, since Nero needed to soak the provincials in order to pay for his pleasures. Vindex succeeded in persuading large numbers of Gauls, both in his own and in neighbouring provinces, to follow him in rebellion under their natural leaders, the tribal dynasts¹¹⁾. That the movement was led by the wealthy is the impression created by the list of tribes and cities involved: Vindex had the support of Aedui, Sequani, and Arverni, and of the city of Vienna, titular colony and capital of the Allobroges¹²⁾. The aim of the revolt was to replace Nero by a man free of his failings (and so of his needs) and acceptable to the Senate. That man might prove to be Ser. Sulpicius Galba, currently governor of Tarraconensis; but although Plutarch and Dio seem to have believed that Vindex proclaimed Galba Emperor, Suetonius has him urge Galba only *ut humano generi assertorem ducemque se accommodaret*, words which have the ring of authenticity¹³⁾. This version is certainly the

10) Brunt, 531 ff., with support from the coin evidence elucidated by Kraay. Similar views are expounded by Raoss (1958), 48 ff., Townend, 337, and Nicols, *op. cit.* (n. 6) 89 f.

11) According to Plut., *Galba* 6.4, 20,000 Gauls perished at Vesontio. Five times that number had been mentioned by Vindex in his letter to Galba (4.5). He may have persuaded himself that he could win over the seven Rhine legions, nominally 42,000 men, with the same number of *auxilia*. So Hainsworth, 91 f., followed by Daly, 94, and inferring that they had already defected. That inference is not just. Vindex says only that the provinces *had* them under arms (δέκα μυριάδας ἀνδρῶν ὀπλισμένων ἐχούσας), he does not say that they are already won over. What he said was intended to encourage his addressee; in a different context Tacitus has Galba referring to *Vindex cum inermi provincia* (i.16.2). But it is not impossible that Vindex was referring to native levies: even Mariccus was able to raise 8,000 amongst the Boii: Tac. ii.61.2 (so J. van Ooteghem, *Et. class.* xxxvi 1968, 20, who claims on the basis of Tac., *Ann.* iii.43.3, that Sacrovir had raised 40,000 at Augustodunum). For the dynasts see Jos., *BJ* iv. 440: Οὐίνδιξ ἄμα τοῖς δυνατοῖς τῶν ἐπιχωρίων.

12) Tribes: Pliny, *NH* iv.106; 109; Tac. i.51.6: iv.17.5. Vienna: i.65 (van Ooteghem, *loc. cit.*, regards Vienna as the centre of the insurrection).

13) Dio (Xiph.; Zon.; John Ant.) lxiii.23 = B 88; Plut., *Galba* 4.3 and 5.2 (ἡγεμονίαν, cf. 6.1); Galba was saluted *imperator* by his own troops, 5.1, but delayed accepting; Suet., *Galba* 9.2. The point is made by Brunt, 535.

more accurate. If Vindex hoped to win general support¹⁴) he would not cause unnecessary jealousy by committing himself irrevocably to one candidate. Galba styled himself *legatus senatus ac populi Romani*¹⁵).

Such a scheme might well have commended itself to a man of Verginius Rufus' origins and background. Verginius was a native of Mediolanum¹⁶), born in A. D. 13 or 14¹⁷) into an undistinguished equestrian family¹⁸). He had to wait for his consulship until the relatively mature age of 49 or 50 in A. D. 63, but he was consul *ordinarius*, only the third man from Cisalpina to achieve that distinction: P. Alfenus Varus was *ordinarius* in A. D. 8, Sextus Papinius Alienus in A. D. 36¹⁹). Four years later Nero appointed him legate of the Upper Rhine legions in succession to Sulpicius Scribonianus Proculus, one of two aristocratic brothers who perished on a charge of conspiracy when Nero was in Greece²⁰).

P. A. Brunt²¹) names a number of senators of equestrian or provincial background whose high principles and genuine regard for the rights of the senate made them men to welcome the downfall of a tyrant. Verginius as well as Vindex could have shared those principles. But an inquiry into the conduct of Verginius based on that assumption will not lead to results of any value. Not all *novi homines* were virtuous. Some succumbed to the temptation of advancing themselves at any cost: I mention only Domitius Afer and Flavius Aper, probably another Gaul, and Epirus

14) Plut., *Galba* 4.2; 5.2; Dio (John Ant.), loc. cit. See Grassl, op. cit. (n. 2), 67 ff.

15) Suet., *Galba* 10.1; Plut., *Galba* 5.1.

16) G. E. F. Chilver, *Cisalpine Gaul*, Oxford, 1939, 98; Th. Mommsen, *Ges. Schrift.* iv, 353 (= *Herm.* vi 1872, 127): "Mailänder"; cf. R. Hanslik, *RE* viiiA 1958, 1536: "aus einem Municipium zwischen Comum und Mediolanum".

17) Pliny, Ep. ii.1.4, where he dies in A. D. 97 aged 83: *annum tertium et octogensimum excessit* (A. D. 14, Hanslik loc. cit.).

18) The phrase is used by A. N. Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny* (Oxford, 1966), 142; justifiably, because he was not only *equestri familia* but *ignoto patre* (Tac. i.52.4); cf. Chilver, op. cit. (n. 16), 98 f.

19) See Chilver, op. cit. (n. 16), 93 ff.

20) Dio (Xiph.) lxxiii.17.2 f. = B 80; Tac., iv. 41.3; *ILS* 9235 = E. M. Smallwood, *Documents Illustrating the Principates of Gaius Claudius and Nero*, Cambridge, 1967, 160; E. Ritterling, *Fasti des röm. Deutschland*, Vienna, 1932, 17, no. 10; 51, no. 9.

21) Brunt, 546.

Marcellus²²). Certainly Verginius had testimonials from both Tacitus and Pliny: the funeral laudation spoken by Tacitus and letters written by Pliny after Verginius' death²³). Even in passing Pliny does not fail to show him off in a favourable light, inserting him into a list of senatorial worthies, such as Cicero, Brutus, Sulla, and Seneca, and of admirable Princes, namely Caesar, Augustus, and Tiberius, who wrote erotic verses without detriment to their reputations²⁴). Yet we must not forget that Tacitus' speech was made when Verginius' fame was at its height, while Pliny had been his *pupillus* and owed him another debt of gratitude for repeatedly promoting his career²⁵).

On the other hand, Verginius' *origo* may enable us to give an answer to the question of his ambitions, at least for the year 68. The commander of the Upper Rhine army was in a position to march over the Alps and to force himself on the capital. Vitellius, admittedly combining the resources of the Upper Rhine with those of his own Lower Rhine command, achieved it in the following year²⁶).

But Fabius Valens, urging Vitellius to act, pointed out the real difference between him and Verginius: *Coming as he did of an equestrian family, and son of a man nobody had heard of, Verginius had been right to hesitate: if he had taken the empire he would have been inadequate to it; refusing it gave him nothing to fear*²⁷). It is worth comparing the social positions of the potential contestants in 68–9. Such a man as Verginius could hardly have thought of himself in the spring of 68 as a successor to the Julio-Claudians in rivalry with the aristocratic Servius Sulpicius Galba, *ordinarius* consul of 33, whose father's ancestry could be traced by Suetonius to the consul of 151 B. C. and that of his mother to L. Mummius the destroyer of Corinth. Besides his ancestry, Galba had his connexions with the Julio-Claudian dynasty in his favour: he had been a *protégé* of the Empress Livia²⁸). The claims of

22) Cn. Domitius Afer (P.I.R.² D 126): Tac., *Ann.* iv.66.1; M. (Flavius) Aper (P.I.R.² A 910): Tac. *Dial.* 2.1; 7.1; T. Clodius Eprius Marcellus (P.I.R.² E 84): Tac. iv. 7.3; cf. ii.53.1; iv.42.5; cf. Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* v.7.3.

23) Pliny, *Ep.* ii.1.6 (Tacitus); ii.1; vi. 10; ix.19 (Pliny).

24) Pliny, *Ep.* v. 3.5.

25) Pliny, *Ep.* ii.1.8.

26) Cf. Tac. ii.17.

27) Tac., i.52.4. Raoss (1960), 99 f., does not give weight to this factor; it is not neglected by Hanslik, art. cit. (n. 16), 1538, or by Daly, 98.

28) Ancestry: Suet., *Galba* 3.4; cf. Plut., *Galba* 3.1. Livia: Suet., *Galba* 5.2;

Galba's successors did not match his own. To be sure, Otho's grandfather owed his advancement to the praetorship to the patronage of the same great lady, and his father became suffect consul in Galba's year, A. D. 33 (it was said that he bore a suspicious likeness to Tiberius Caesar), but the family came from Ferentium and did not belong to the Republican nobility²⁹).

In this last respect, Vitellius' title was even more flimsy. Whatever his grandfather the equestrian procurator of Augustus put about as to the royal ancestry of the family (kings of Latium were claimed), another contemporary version had them descended from slaves³⁰). The *equus* had four sons in the senate, and three of them did well with the help of Tiberius and his heirs, one so well that he held the consulship three times and the censorship as Claudius' colleague. It was the eminence of this man that made his son Aulus Vitellius generally acceptable as Princeps³¹). Much further down the social scale came Vespasian of Reate in the Sabine country. Vespasian was a *novus homo* in the fullest sense, being preceded in the senate only by his elder brother, though his maternal uncle had reached the praetorship³²). If we ask what were Vespasian's connexions with the Julio-Claudian dynasty, the answer from Suetonius is that he enjoyed the patronage of Claudius – or, it was said, of his freedman Narcissus – and, if Vitellius' supporters were to be believed, the patronage of Vitellius' father when he was Claudius' colleague³³). As A. N. Sherwin-White has pointed out³⁴), a senator from Cisalpina would not come far behind a man with such antecedents. Both owed the posts they held at the end of Nero's principate to the *novitas* that made them innocuous in spite of any military talent. In the spring of 68, then,

Plut., loc. cit. See Townend, *Herm.* lxxxix 1961, 241, considering both accounts derived, like Tac. i.49, from Pliny.

29) Suet., *Otho* 1.1, writes of the mother of M. Otho, IIIvir a.a.a. f.f. c. 7 B.C., *incertum an ingenua*; cf. Tac. ii.48.2: *se primum in familiam novam imperium intulisse*; 50.1. See T. P. Wiseman, *New Men in the Roman Senate*, 139 B.C. – 14 A. D., Oxford, 1971, 258f., and E. Badian, *Hist.* xii 1963, 143.

30) Suet., *Vit.* 1f. For the Vitellii, see Nicols, op. cit. (n. 6), 15 ff.

31) Tac. iii.86.1

32) Suet., *Div. Vesp.* 1f. The antecedents of Vespasian are thoroughly discussed by Nicols, op. cit. (n. 6) 1 ff., and by T. P. Wiseman, *Titus Flavius and the Indivisible Subject*, Exeter, 1978, 7 ff.

33) Suet., *Div. Vesp.* 4.1; Tac. iii.6.3.

34) Op. cit. (n. 18), 143; so Nicols, op. cit. (n. 6), 90 f. For Vespasian, see Tac., ii.76.2f.: *cessisti etiam Galbae imaginibus ... confugiendum est ad imperium*, a passage pertinently cited by Daly, 99, n. 103.

Verginius might reasonably have thought the Principate above him, while by the end of the following year he could have considered himself as well qualified as the successful claimant, a fact that would not be lost on Vespasian.

This conclusion leaves untouched the wider question of Verginius' loyalty to Nero. The most likely place to find an answer is on the battlefield of Vesontio. If Verginius delayed putting down the insurgents, or if the battle was an accident, we should be justified in seeing Verginius as defecting from Nero like Vindex and Galba, if not in concert with them. How long, then, after Vindex declared against Nero did the battle take place? Nero heard of the rising at Naples, according to Suetonius on the actual anniversary of his mother's murder³⁵). That had probably taken place on 20 March, on the day after the celebration of the Quinquatria began at Baiae³⁶), and it is tempting to accept J. B. Hainsworth's suggestion that Vindex timed his rising for the Ides of March, the anniversary of another and even more notorious assassination³⁷); but even if insurrections could be timed so nicely, the Gauls felt no ideological animus against Julius Caesar any more than they did against his dynasty or against the Principate as such³⁸). If Nero did hear of Vindex's declaration on the anniversa-

35) Suet., *Nero* 40.3.

36) Suet., *Nero* 34.2. There are difficulties connected with the accounts of the murder here and in Tac., *Ann.* xiv. 4 ff. and Dio lxii.12.2 ff., but they are topographical rather than chronological (P. J. Bicknell, *CR N. S.* xiii 1963, 261 f.). The festival began on 19 March (Ovid, *Fasti* iii.812). I assume that Agrippina arrived at Bauli on the first day, dined at Baiae the same night, was precipitated into the sea in the early hours of the 20th, and killed later that day. Dio lxii.13.1 says that Nero feasted his mother ἐπὶ πολλὰς ἡμέρας; that is probably an "improvement" on the source(s) that yielded Tacitus' *tracto in longum convictu* (4.8) and Suetonius' *protraxit convivium* (34.2).

A more serious uncertainty persists: was it really on the actual anniversary of Agrippina's death, as Suetonius states, that Nero heard of the rising? Any day of the Quinquatria would make it plausible to make that poetic claim. Certainly Nero heard the news at Naples and *Quinquatrium festos dies apud Baias frequentabat* (Tac., *Ann.* xiv. 4.1). I accept 20 March, with this slight reservation. Shotter (1975), 64 and 73, has Nero hearing the news on 19 March or later; cf. Woodside, *TAPA* lxviii 1937, 134 (*about March 19*); so van Ooteghem, art. cit. (n. 11), 19; Kraay, 134 (*about 20 March*); so Mattingly, art. cit. (n. 4), 33.

37) Hainsworth, 87, rejected by Shotter, loc. cit.

38) Tac. iv.55.2 (but his claim to Caesarian ancestry was a personal whim); for Dio's view of Vindex's attitude towards the dynasty, see lxiii.22.3 ff. = B 85. Mommsen's view, *Der letzte Kampf der röm. Rep.*, *Herm.* xiii 1878, 90 ff. = *Ges. Schrift.* iv, 333 ff., was ruled out by Kraay and Brunt.

ry of his mother's death, 14 March is the latest date that will do for the rising³⁹). As for the date of the battle of Vesontio and Vindex's death, scholars, as we have seen, are of widely differing opinions. Some put the battle nearly three months after the beginning of the rising, a few days before – or even a few days after – Nero's suicide on 9 June⁴⁰), others towards the end of April or early in May. Here a clear verdict is possible. Those who opt for the later date attach much importance to the accounts of the revolt given by Suetonius in the *Galba* and by Zonaras⁴¹), in which the battle of Vesontio is the penultimate event in the story of the fall of Nero. But neither writer offers a calibrated time-scale into which the information he provides can be fitted. Zonaras is an epitomator, and in the life of Galba Suetonius, being preoccupied with his subject, is not likely to have much to say of a period in which, we are specifically told, he did nothing. There is no solid reason to believe that the movements of Verginius before the battle were dilatory; the onus of proof lies on those who would put it later than the third or fourth week of April⁴²).

But what was Verginius doing at Vesontio at all? Instead of marching straight from his headquarters at Moguntiacum to Lugdunum, which had remained loyal to Nero and was under siege from Vindex⁴³), Verginius stopped at a town two thirds of the way there and invested it. Several explanations are to hand. On D. C. A. Shotter's view, which is supported by the language of

39) I assume fifty miles a day for the imperial post at normal speeds; 150 for messages of exceptional urgency (most of those with which we are concerned belong to this category); and twenty miles a day for troops on long marches. See A. M. Ramsay, *The Speed of the Imperial Post*, *JRS* xv 1925, 60 ff.; H. Schmitt, *Hist.* vii 1958, 379 ff.; Nicols, *op. cit.* (n. 6), 41 ff.; 68 f.

40) Nero's death: P.I.R.² D 129, p. 38.

41) Suet., *Galba* 11: *mors Vindicis ... supervenientibus ab urbe nuntiis ...*; Dio (Zon.) lxiii.24.4 a = B 88: τῆς δ' ἀποστασίας παρατεινομένης ὁ Οὐίνδιξ ἑαυτὸν ἀπέσφαξε. But cf. Plut., *Galba* 6.6: εἰς Κλουνίαν ... ἀναχωρήσας ἐν τῷ μετανοεῖν ... διέτριβεν.

42) Another reason for dating Vesontio late is given by Woodside, *art. cit.* (n. 36), 279. According to the order of events in Suet., *Galba* 11, Galba had enrolled a legion in Spain before the report of Vindex's death arrived; and the *dies natalis* of VII Galbiana was 10 June (*ILS* 9125). But the enrollment of the legion, a lengthy business, is not brought by Suetonius into relation with the arrival of the news that Vindex was dead. The "order of events" cannot be pressed. Raoss (1960), 97, draws attention to Suet., *Nero* 42.2, which mentions occasions *cum prosperi quiddam ex provinciis nuntiatum esset*, and suggests that one such occasion brought news of Vesontio.

43) Tac. i.65.2.

Xiphilinus⁴⁴), the blockade of Vesontio was a pretext, designed to conceal from Nero the fact that Verginius too was disloyal to him and reluctant to take serious measures against the rebels. Hainsworth's idea⁴⁵) was that Verginius was wasting time and effort in making a protest against the constitutional *fait accompli* with which Vindex and Galba confronted the senate by replacing Nero with Galba. Thirdly, towards the end of his life C. E. Stevens held that Verginius was using the valley of the Doubs, the tributary of the Rhône on which Vesontio stood, as his own route into Italy. Vindex's fortress had to be reduced because it stood in the way of his own attempt on the Principate. I cannot accept any of these views. The first two raise the question why Verginius should have endangered forces that were essentially on the same side as he was – the side of Nero's opponents. Against the more revolutionary theory of Stevens stands the reason I have already given against seeing Verginius as an independent claimant to power in the spring of 68. Nor is it clear why he should choose a road that led him past a stronghold committed to a rival claimant; if more northerly routes through the Alps were impassable in March he could afford to wait⁴⁶); and once Verginius had gone as far as massacring Vindex's forces it is hard to see why he should then have given up his plan.

But Verginius' blockade of Vesontio need cause no surprise. There was a good reason for it if the city was a centre of Vindex's movement, even the main centre. It was the capital of the Sequani, who were his supporters⁴⁷), and it may even have been there, though it was in another governor's province, that he made his declaration and mustered forces against his own hostile capital, Lugdunum⁴⁸). For Verginius to blockade Vesontio was a sure way of bringing the siege of Lugdunum to an end and of freeing its loyal colonists and the single cohort, XIII Urbana, that was stationed there⁴⁹). We do not know how long it was before Vindex

44) Shotter (1967), 375, n. 2; Dio (Xiph.) lxxiii.24.1 = B 87: γενόμενος δὲ ἐν Οὔεσσοντίωνι ταύτην ἐπολιόρκει, πρόφασιν ἔπει μὴ ἐδέξατο αὐτόν.

45) Hainsworth, 93 ff.

46) For the possible routes, see Ramsay, art. cit. (n. 39), 64 f.

47) *Maximum oppidum Sequanorum*, Caes. BG i.38.1 ff.; above, n. 12.

48) Pliny, NH iv. 106; 109; cf. Tac., iv.67.1, with Brunt, 545, n. 3. If the declaration was made at Vesontio it must be advanced at least one day: there are 180 m.p. between Vesontio and Lugdunum.

49) Tac., Ann. iii.41.1, with H. Freis, *Die Cohortes Urbanae*, Cologne, etc., 1967, 28 ff.

gave up the siege of Lugdunum; if he thought it was likely to succeed quickly he may have hesitated some time. For the rebels, taking Lugdunum offered not only prestige but control of the mint and of the central headquarters of the financial organization of the Tres Galliae⁵⁰).

Even if we put the battle of Vesontio as early as mid-April, however, it may still have been an accident, as so many scholars believe. There is a circumstantial account in Xiphilinus and John of Antioch⁵¹) of a meeting between Vindex and Verginius which ended in agreement between the two (John gives details of the terms: Verginius was to have Gaul, Vindex Spain, and Galba Italy and the remaining provinces), and Plutarch, like them, has independent action by the armies themselves bringing about the battle. If there were no prior agreement, scholars have reasonably asked⁵²), how would Vindex have dared to approach the Rhine legions? Vindex's twenty thousand men were not trained or experienced. On the other hand, if the two men were agreed on revolt, how did the conflict come about? Brunt has offered a persuasive answer: through the passion for killing and looting that the legions later evinced, not only in Gaul but in their native Italy. Brunt goes on to draw attention to the exchange between the historian Cluvius Rufus and Verginius in which Cluvius asked Verginius' pardon for an account of the transactions in which the historian had preferred truth to friendship⁵³). Verginius replied that he had acted as he did in order that men might be free to write as they pleased. Where lay the criticism? It would be absurd to identify the cause of Nero with that of freedom of speech. On Brunt's view, Verginius' claim to be a champion of *libertas* is best understood to refer to his refusal to usurp the Principate himself.

50) See Freis, loc. cit., who for the financial procurators of Lugdunensis and Aquitania cites P. Wuilleumier, L'Administration de la Lyonnaise sous le Haut-Empire, *Ann. de l'Univ. de Lyon*, Ser. iii, Vol. xvi 1946, 47. For Lugdunum as the centre for the collection of the *vicesima libertatis*, the *vicesima hereditatum* and the *quadragesima Galliarum*, H.-G. Pflaum, *Procurateurs équestres sous le Haut-Empire romain*, Paris, 1950, 61 f., 66. For the mint, H. Mattingly, C.R.E.B.M. I, xvi. Freis, loc. cit., points out that the successor of *cohors XIII* was *cohors XVII Lugdunensis ad monetam* (ILS 2130). The cohort was under command of the legate but may have been tampered with by the procurator, who sometimes had soldiers detailed to him (*AE* 1935, 16). Galba replaced *Cohors XVII* with *Cohors XVIII* (*Tac.* 1.64.3; 80.1; *Plut.*, *Otho* 3.3; Freis, op. cit. 9).

51) Dio (Xiph.; John Ant.) lxxiii.24.2-4¹ = B 87 f.

52) e.g., Brunt, 537 ff.; Daly, 95.

53) Pliny, *Ep.* ix. 19.5.

Cluvius' accusation could not have been the unpardonable one that a senator, still alive at the time and liable to suspicion, might have aimed at supreme power. It could be said that Verginius had failed to maintain discipline and control. To that he replied that he had done all in his power to preserve liberty of action to the senate and people of Rome.

There is much to be said for this interpretation of the exchange. Certainly part of Verginius' title to glory lay in his having renounced imperial powers: *pulso qui Vindice quondam imperium adseruit non sibi sed patriae*⁵⁴). But I cannot accept the interpretation in its entirety. Firstly, what Verginius said was not really an answer to Cluvius' apology, if Cluvius was apologizing for accusing Verginius of incompetence; he replied that he had *acted* in the way he had in order to achieve something: *ideo me fecisse quod feci, ut esset liberum vobis scribere quae libuisset*. That would be no answer to an accusation of incompetence, but a turning of the question. Of course, if Verginius had no answer to the charge he could not give one. But there is more than that. One humble admirer of Verginius, a forester called Pylades living on his estate between Monza and Como, offered thanksgiving to Iuppiter Optimus Maximus *pro salute et victoria L. Vergini Rufi*⁵⁵). Pylades the *saltuarius* thought soon after the battle, perhaps immediately afterwards, that Verginius had won a victory. Furthermore, the inscription records fulfilment of a vow – *v(otum) s(olvit)*. When had that vow been made? Presumably when Pylades heard that Verginius had been ordered against the rebels and knew that there was going to be a battle. Now it was over and Verginius victo-

54) Pliny, *Ep.* ix. 19.1. Daly, 81, regards resort to the epitaph as “futile”, but he is thinking mainly of the ablative absolute construction, which has been variously interpreted: causally by B. W. Henderson, *The Life and Principate of the Emperor Nero*, London, 1903, 404; temporally by Mommsen, *Ges. Schrift.* iv, 341, n. 6 (= *Herm.* xiii 1878, 99, n. 4).

55) ILS 982 = M. McCrum and A. G. Woodhead, *Select Documents of the Principates of the Flavian Emperors ... A. D. 68–96*, Cambridge, 1961, 23. Note also the language of Plut., *Galba* 10.1: Verginius caused Galba anxiety after the death of Nero τῷ δυνάμειος πολλῆς καὶ μαχιμωτάτης ἄρχειν προσειληφῶς τὸ νενικηκέναι Οὐίνδικα. Mommsen, *Herm.* vi 1872, 127 (= *Ges. Schrift.* iv, 353 f.) remarks on the formula *pro salute et victoria* as appropriate only to an Emperor, and concludes that it was inscribed during the period of Verginius' hesitation after his victory; and B. W. Henderson, *op. cit.* (n. 54), 401, takes the inscription as a salutation as Emperor. That is unjustified. We have no other *votum* for the victory of a private individual (not surprisingly), but vows “pro salute” of a master are common enough, and the *salus* was bound up with the *victoria*.

rious and safe. Thirdly, for troops that had got out of hand, crushed the commander's potential allies, and caused the death of a man whom he is alleged greatly to have mourned, the legions remained remarkably sure of themselves. The looters must have had their fill from Vesontio and Vindex's massacred followers, yet they are said to have been annoyed because they were not adequately rewarded for their share in Verginius' operations – precisely the suppression of the revolt⁵⁶). Lastly, Tacitus has nothing to say of a blunder. He seems to present a cut and dried issue, resolved in a battle conducted by Vindex and Verginius. Of the Treveri and Lingones in the Gallic revolt of 70 he says that they were prejudiced in the eyes of the Gallic provinces by the consciousness that they had sided with Verginius during the revolt of Vindex⁵⁷). If the battle at Vesontio was a real one, as I infer, it looks as if Verginius was still loyal to Nero at the time it took place.

Rejecting the story of the accident raises problems. The first, posed by Brunt – how Vindex dared face the legions at Vesontio – is part of a larger question, how Vindex could have embarked on revolt in the first place if he could not count on the support, active or passive, of Verginius and his troops. Syme's suggestion⁵⁸) that Vindex came to be at loggerheads with the procurator in his province, combined with Brunt's analysis of the part played by the exactions of Nero and his agents in stirring up discontent in other parts of the empire and revolt in Gaul, provides the answer. Defending the interests of his fellow Gauls against Nero's exorbitant taxation, Vindex became a target for the Princes' procurators. With his intransigence reported at Rome and in Greece, Vindex could soon have been faced with the unpalatable but unavoidable alternatives of recall in disgrace or revolt. As praetorian senator he knew how much Nero's extravagance and cruelty were hated by the governing class at Rome; as a Gaul he knew how much Nero's exactions were hated by the governing class of his province and others. He was forced to gamble on that double hatred. Vindex's

56) So Raoss (1960), 97, n. 1; see Tac. i.8.2: *superbia recentis victoriae*, and cf. 51.4 and Plut., *Galba* 18.7: *μεγάλων μὲν ἀξιούντες αὐτοὺς διὰ τὴν μάχην ἦν ἐμαχέσαντο πρὸς Οὐίνδικα μηδενὸς δὲ τυγχάνοντες, ἀπαρηγόρητοι τοῖς ἀρχουσίην ἦσαν.*

57) Tac. iv.69.2: *Vindicis motu cum Verginio steterant*. The general point is made by van Ooteghem, art. cit. (n. 11), 22.

58) Syme, 461 f. For Galba and his procurator, see Plut., *Galba* 4.1; cf. Suet., *Galba* 12.1.

approach to Vesontio was a natural consequence, entailed by his original decision. He could not afford to let a bastion of the movement, perhaps its headquarters, be invested and taken.

With Verginius doing Nero's work for him at Vesontio we are left with another question: at what point did he abandon his Princes? For the evidence that he did so looks impressive, and the full force of the testimony of Suetonius, Plutarch, and Dio (i. e., Xiphilinus and John of Antioch) has yet to be faced. To take the evidence in chronological order (which happens also to be the order of increasing detail), Suetonius says that when Nero heard of the defection of *ceteri exercitus*⁵⁹) – he does not identify them – it threw Nero into the panic that immediately preceded his suicide. If Verginius' army is included, his defection came late in the day. Plutarch's version is that Verginius abandoned Nero before the battle, and when his soldiery saluted him *imperator*, he declared that he would not accept, nor would he allow anyone else to take power except as the nominee of the senate. The offer was renewed, and declined once more, after the battle⁶⁰). To this account Xiphilinus adds the detail that it was when Nero heard that Galba had been proclaimed emperor, and about the desertion of Rufus, that he became terrified, began to make preparations at Rome, and sent Rubrius Gallus and others against the rebels⁶¹). All this testimony has been treated with considerable respect in recent years. Thus Brunt holds⁶²) that it was Verginius' disloyalty known or suspected from the first that made it necessary for Nero to recruit from the city proletariat and to recall troops from the east, to form a new legion from the fleet at Misenum, and to create a strike force under the command of Rubrius Gallus, of which the advance guard was dispatched with Petronius Turpilia-

59) Suet., *Nero* 47.1.

60) Plut., *Galba* 6.1 f.

61) Dio (Xiph.) lxxiii.24.2 ff., 25.1 ff. = B 87 f.; 27.1 = B 91 (desertion of Rufus).

62) Brunt, 540 f., cf. Kraay, 43, n. 86. Recruitment from the urban proletariat: Suet., *Nero* 44. Troops recalled: Tac., i.6.2; 31.3; 70.1. The new legion: i.6.2; Plut., *Galba* 15.4; Suet., *Galba* 12.2. Brunt accounts for the presence of I Italica at Lugdunum early in 69 (Tac., i.74.2) by suggesting that it remained in Gaul, which it reached before Nero's death as part of the advance guard under Petronius Turpilianus (Dio (Xiph.) lxxiii.27.1 = B 91). But probably it was Galba who sent a legion that had betrayed Nero to oversee a colony that had remained loyal to him (so already Syme, *AJP* lvi 1937, 11, against E. Ritterling, *RE* xii (1925), 1409, and W. Schur, *Die Orientpolitik des Kaisers Nero*, *Klio*, Beiheft xv, 1923, 108; Parker, *Roman Legions* 139).

nus. The concatenation of forces, superfluous to crush Galba, betokens apprehensions of the disloyalty of the Rhine armies. As we are told nothing of the opening date of this series of events, except that Nero's attitude towards the revolt changed when he heard of Galba's proclamation and the defection of Verginius⁶³), it could still be put after Vesontio. But the testimony deserves more radical treatment: outright rejection.

Its first weakness is venial: poor detail. In John of Antioch the general whom Nero "sends out" is "Rufus Gallus", who does not venture to engage in battle with Galba, but makes a compact with Vindex⁶⁴). Presumably this is a confusion with Rubrius Gallus, and John still means that Verginius made his compact; but it does not inspire confidence. Next, a point made above needs to be reiterated: each author is writing and selecting from the material before him for his own purpose; he has his own time-scale, within which he speeds up or slows down as the material interests him more or less. The *ceteri exercitus* whose defection terrified Nero in Suetonius' account may well be the forces of Petronius Turpilianus, which went over to Galba and so made Nero despair of a military victory⁶⁵); certainly Verginius is not mentioned. Thirdly, all the remaining sources, except Xiphilinus when he is giving the occasion for the dispatch of Rubrius Gallus, connect Verginius' defection with the battle of Vesontio. The reasons that have already been given for doubting Verginius' disloyalty at the time of that battle serve also to cast doubt on the testimony of our sources. Fourthly, the Plutarch-Dio story of Verginius' defection may be explained as part and parcel of an account of Nero's fall and Galba's accession to power, indeed an account of the entire series of events of A.D. 68-69, that was designed to bring out the virtue of the general who refused to accept the Principate from the hands of the soldiery, though he was willing to use them to revolt from the tyrant Nero. Finally, Nero's recruitment of additional troops to deal with the revolt is not strong evidence that the Rhine legions were disloyal. Nero could expect them to deal with a revolt in Gaul, but if the revolt carried them into Spain, which Galba's proclamation seemed to make certain, it would deprive the Rhine

63) Dio (Xiph.) lxxiii.27.1 = B 91; but cf. Suet., *Nero* 42.1 (Galba only). For the date of Galba's declaration, see L. Holzapfel, *Klio* xii 1912, 491; Raoss (1960), 53, n. 3.

64) Dio (John Ant.) lxxiii.24.1 = B 87.

65) Dio (Zon.) lxxiii.27.1 a = B 91.

frontier of enough troops to open up Gaul to the Germans. (That was a factor that weakened Vitellius' position at Bedriacum in the following year⁶⁶.) Hence Nero's alarm when he heard in the second week in April of Galba's revolt. Galba had only one legion, the Sixth Victrix, two *alae*, and three cohorts⁶⁷). But the Iberian provinces were rich in resources and manpower⁶⁸), and as soon as he had declared against Nero Galba set about enrolling fresh legionary troops and auxiliaries⁶⁹). Perhaps what Nero was doing after he had heard of Galba's defection was to create an expeditionary force which was to be marched to Spain through a pacified Gaul or shipped there (the less likely method with the enemy in control of coasts and port⁷⁰). These newly raised and assembled troops were in Cisalpine Gaul and Italy⁷¹) between Nero and the (as I would argue) still loyal Verginius on the other side of the Alps, and it could have been the defection of some of these troops that drove Nero to despair⁷²).

Troops varying in history and background, placed under separate commanders in different parts of the peninsula, would not have been unanimous in their reactions. The legions summoned from "Illyricum" to Nero's aid would be XI Claudia Pia Fidelis from Dalmatia and at least one of the Pannonian legions X and XIII Gemina⁷³). XIV Gemina with its eight cohorts of Batavians was on its way to the east, and it too may have been recalled from

66) Tac. ii.32.1: *Suetonius Paulinus . . . disseruit: exercitum Vitellii univ-
sum advenisse, nec multum virium a tergo quoniam . . . deserere Rheni ripam
irrupturis tam infestis nationibus non conducatur*; cf. 57.1. The peril materialized:
iii.46.1.

67) Suet., *Galba* 10.2; Jos., *BJ* ii, 375; Tac., v.16.3.

68) See J. J. van Nostrand in T. Frank, ed., *An Economic Survey of Ancient
Rome* iii, Baltimore, 1937, 145 ff.

69) Suet., *Galba* 10.2. Raecius Gallus may be one of the new officers en-
rolled (G. Alföldy, *Fasti Hisp.*, 184 f.)

70) So Shotton (1967), 373. See *AE* 1948, 3 = M. McCrum and A. G.
Woodhead, *Select Documents of the Principates of the Flavian Emperors . . .
A.D. 68-96* Cambridge, 1961, 31, with Raoss (1958), 102 ff.; (1960), 107 ff.

71) For the composition of these forces see Syme, art. cit. (n. 62) 10 f., who
denies that the German troops destined for the east can have returned to Italy
before Nero's death (Tac., i.31.2). The legionaries recruited from the fleet at
Misenum cannot have felt much enthusiasm for Nero, as Brunt points out, since
Galba incorporated them in the army (Dio lv.24.2., cf. Ritterling, art. cit. (n. 62),
1381 ff.; or rather, perhaps, since they ventured to demand recognition as regulars
from Galba: Tac., i, 6, 2; Suet., *Galba* 12.2; Plut., *Galba* 15.3 f.).

72) This is Zonaras' version, Dio lxiii.27.1 a = B 91; cf. Suet., *Nero* 47.1.

73) Tac., i.31.2. For the movements of legions, see M. Parker, *Roman
Legions*, 139 ff.; for X Gemina, see Ritterling, art. cit. (n. 62), 1680, n.*.

the Balkans⁷⁴). These legions will not have arrived in northern Italy together, and I Italica, which was being recruited for the eastern expedition⁷⁵), would be elsewhere again. Two men took charge: Petronius Turpilianus, who was sent on ahead with the larger group, and Rubrius Gallus⁷⁶). I suggest that Petronius joined some of the "Illyrican" legions in northern Italy, while Rubrius Gallus was left to bring on I Italica, and that the Batavians initiated the mutiny in his army, perhaps in concert with one of the Pannonian legions (the record of XI Claudia P. F. makes it hard to see it participating in the overthrow of the Julio-Claudian dynasty⁷⁷), forcing the loyal XIV Gemina to acquiesce and depriving Turpilianus of effective command⁷⁸). In the south Gallus followed suit or acted independently⁷⁹). After Nero's death the loyal troops in the north, XIV Gemina, probably XI Claudia P. F., sent their appeals to Verginius Rufus, who had the merit not only of having been loyal to Nero but of having won a signal victory over the rebels, as an alternative Princeps more acceptable than Galba⁸⁰).

Our sources differ on the number of salutations offered to Verginius and refused by him. "Often" is what Plutarch and Dio claim⁸¹); and that word again magnifies Verginius' glory. Plutarch

74) Galba sent XIV Gemina to Dalmatia, and Tacitus' note on the army of Illyricum in his principate reads as if it too might have entered Italy from the Balkans (i.9.3): *quies et Illyrico, quamquam excitatae a Nerone legiones, dum in Italia cunctantur, Verginium legationibus adissent.*

75) Suet., *Nero* 19.2.

76) Dio (Xiph.) lxxiii.27.1; (Zon.) 1 a = B 91.

77) Dio lx.15.4; cf. Suet., *Div. Claud.* 13.2.

78) Loyalty of XIV Gemina Martia Victrix (so entitled by Nero, ILS. 2648 = Smallwood, Docs. 283): Tac., ii.11.1; forced to desert ii.27.2. Turpilianus disloyal: Dio (Zon.) lxxiii.27.1 a = B 91. Loyal: Plut., *Galba* 15.2 and 17.3; Tacitus records his execution as *dux Neronis* (i.6.1, cf. 37.3). Explanation of the discrepancy: Boissevain, 91 (the inclusion of Turpilianus among the deserters an error of condensation); Syme, art. cit. (n. 62), 13 (he defected from Nero without declaring for Galba). Turpilianus, like XIV Gemina, had served Nero in Britain; if he was deposed in a mutiny (note that he died *in urbe*, away from his troops), that put him in a worse category than Verginius in Galba's eyes: he had never acknowledged the new princeps; and he was more vulnerable.

79) Shotter (1975), 71, thinks that Nero wrongly believed that Turpilianus had defected with the Batavians, while Rubrius Gallus, who was in favour with the Flavians (Jos., *BJ* vii.91; Juv., *Sat.* iv. 104 ff.) deserted in May.

80) Daly, 96, n. 89, thinks that the "Illyrian" legions supported Verginius before the battle of Vesontio or at least before Nero's death; *contra*, Chilver, 32. The wording of Tacitus, i.9.3, slightly favours the later date.

81) Plut., *Galba* 6.1; Dio (Xiph.) lxxiii.25.1 = B 88; (Exc. Val.) 29.5 = B 100; lxxviii.2.4 = B 188.

bases it on four named occasions⁸²) of which he seems to put the first before the battle of Vesontio; the offer was certainly renewed after the battle; he describes another occasion, when news of Nero's death reached the armies, with picturesque detail of a tribune drawing his sword and giving Verginius the choice of it or the empire; finally he mentions the offer made nearly a year later, after the death of Otho. Xiphilinus⁸³) repeats the story of the offer that followed the battle, without indicating precisely how long afterwards it was made. I reject the first two occasions as doublets and originating as part of the glorification of Verginius, and accept the last two. The Rhine legions were slow to desert Nero, says Tacitus⁸⁴), and if they did so, as I have suggested, after they had destroyed Galba's ally Vindex, perhaps only when they knew that their Princeps was dead, they then had good reason to prefer Verginius to Galba, whom they had known thirty years before as a harsh master⁸⁵) and who was likely to prove harsher still after what they had done at Vesontio. To this salutation, and the offer made, probably simultaneously, by the legions in northern Italy, I would add only the well attested but not very serious salutation that followed Otho's death, making two occasions in all to become πολλάκις in the adulatory literature.

Why was Verginius Rufus loyal to Nero? The first possible factor is a straightforward one. The man owed his advancement to the consulship and to high command to Nero. Galba, Otho, Vinicianus and the Scribonii *fratres*, Corbulo, all who perished on suspicion of disloyalty or who did rebel, had an hereditary claim to their positions⁸⁶). Vindex it is true was an Aquitanian; but he was of royal descent and the son of a senator, and need feel no special gratitude to Nero for his praetorship and praetorian province⁸⁷).

82) Plut., loc. cit.; 6.2; 10.2 (πάλις); *Otho* 18.3 f.

83) Dio (Xiph.) lxxiii.25 = B 88.

84) Tac. i.8.2.

85) Suet., *Galba* 6, 2 f.

86) See van Ooteghem, art. cit. (n. 11), 23. The author of the *coniuratio Viniciana* (Suet., *Nero* 36.1) belonged to the notorious family of the Annii (P.I.R.² A 700). The Sulpicii Scribonii were sons of the senator Scribonius Proculus, killed by Caligula in A.D. 40 (Dio lix.26.2), and they were connected with Sulpicius Camerinus and Licinius Crassus Frugi (Warmington, op. cit. (n. 4), 156, who writes (157) that *only men of the highest social origin could challenge the Julio-Claudian family*). For Corbulo, see Syme, *JRS* lx 1970, 27 ff.

87) Dio (Xiph.) lxxiii.22.1² = B 84: Ἀκυτανὸς τοῦ βασιλικοῦ φύλου, κατὰ δὲ τὸν πατέρα βουλευτῆς τῶν Ῥωμαίων. See Brunt, 546, plausibly suggesting the Arverni as Vindex's tribe.

Secondly, we are told by writers with a friendly interest in Verginius that he refused to accept the Principate unless it were offered by the senate. Since his declared principle was that the choice of emperor should lie with the senate, and the senate made no pronouncement on the subject, Verginius had to remain loyal until the troops in Italy mutinied and Nymphidius Sabinus tricked the praetorians under his command into giving up their Emperor, leaving the way for the senate to proclaim Galba⁸⁸). Verginius is stated even by Tacitus to have hesitated before accepting Galba's régime⁸⁹): *nec statim pro Galba Verginius*. He had good reason to share his soldiers' fears; but fear underpinned a respectable reason for hesitation: Verginius could claim that the senate's declaration had been made under duress. But, unsatisfactory as the method of selection had been, the result was unlikely to be reversed. Verginius acquiesced, rejected his troops' offer of the purple, and forced them likewise to acknowledge Galba. This was the act that gave Verginius his finest hour, his *gloria*⁹⁰), and brought him into extreme danger. After news of Vesontio reached him Galba had been near suicide and had retired in despair to Clunia. The fact that he addressed Verginius a letter from there appealing to him to join the movement does not prove that Verginius was already in revolt from Nero: it was the only recourse that Galba had⁹¹). We hear of no response from Verginius, and Galba was still at Clunia on 16 June when he heard of his proclamation by the senate⁹²). On his way to Rome Galba executed one man who had been loyal to Nero, Petronius Turpilianus, and had others ruthlessly done away with⁹³). Verginius, though coldly received and deprived of his command, survived. Here was a servant of the senate who (unlike Galba himself) did not venture even to declare himself its legate without sanction; Verginius' loyalty to Galba was now as assured as his loyalty to Nero had been. Besides, there was the antagonistic Upper Rhine army to consider. To execute Verginius now would be to exacerbate the fears and irritation of the troops⁹⁴).

88) Tac., i.5.1; Plut., *Galba* 8; cf. Dio lxiii.27.3 = B 93, with Boissevain's notes.

89) i.8.2; cf. 52.3.

90) Pliny, *Ep.* ii.1.2.

91) Plut., *Galba* 6.5, cf. Brunt, 542.

92) Suet., *Galba* 11.1; Plut., *Galba* 7.1.

93) Tac., i.37.3.

94) Tac. i.8.2; cf. Plut., *Galba* 22.2; Dio (Xiph.) lxiv.4.1 = B 103. Brunt, 543, against Chilver, 32, holds that Verginius Rufus and the commanders of the Illyrian legions survived because they were prompt to obey after Galba's official

The murder of Fonteius Capito, which Galba accepted, alienated the Lower Rhine army, even though they had little part in the defeat of Vindex⁹⁵).

Galba and Verginius solved their problem with a compromise⁹⁶). The price of Verginius' life was that he should allow it to be put about that he had been a sympathizer of Galba's all along, that he had been in negotiation with Vindex and that the battle of Vesontio had been a tragic mistake brought about by his legions getting out of control. Perhaps this was the story that Verginius brought to Galba; at any rate he chose to accept it. It had a double advantage: it allowed him to keep Verginius alive and (more important) it forced Verginius to disown his troops. This then would be the source of the story of the "mistake" in Plutarch and Dio. Verginius' insistence that the senate should choose the Princeps could be played up, not perhaps his refusal of offers of the Principate.

It was not many months before a *comp* brought to power another Princeps, with different supporters and necessarily a distinct ideology. Under Otho's new dispensation Verginius received what was for a *novus homo* the extraordinary honour of a second consulship, which, though it lasted only a month (March, 69), followed immediately upon the consulships of Otho himself and his brother, with Otho sacrificing a month of his own to accommodate Verginius⁹⁷). This requires explanation, and it is not quite enough with Tacitus to treat it as a sop to the Upper Rhine legions. They no longer owed their loyalty to Verginius himself, who had given them grounds for resentment by refusing their acclamation⁹⁸). Indeed, Verginius narrowly escaped death at Ticinum at the hands of Vitellius' soldiers, who cared nothing now for his once having been their commander⁹⁹). They would give their loyalty to any man who would owe his throne to them

recognition, and that intrigues to set Verginius Rufus on the throne must be dated before Galba's proclamation had made such activity treasonable.

95) Tac., i.8.2.

96) So Syme, 179, and G. H. Stevenson, CAH x, 810f., accepting the version put about under the Flavians.

97) Tac., i.77.2; Plut., *Otho* 1.2. See A. Degrassi, *Fasti consulari dell' Impero Romano*, Roma, 1952, *s.a.*, and Townend, *AJP* lxxxiii 1962, 120, who shows that Verginius held office only during March, not, as Tacitus implies (*proximos menses*), in March and April.

98) Tac. ii.68.4: *manebat admiratio viri et fama, sed oderant ut fastidii*.

99) Tac. loc. cit.: *exitium consularis et quondam ducis sui flagitabant*.

instead of winning it, as Galba had done, in spite of them¹⁰⁰). As Tacitus comments, the support they had once offered to Verginius would be a valuable tool in the hands of any other pretender. That had already been shown at the beginning of January, 69, when the legions had destroyed Galba's images and declared first for SPQR, then for Vitellius¹⁰¹). By the time Otho came to power they had already made their choice; and the last time an offer was made to Verginius it was in rivalry to Vitellius and by the defeated supporters of Otho (Verginius gave them the slip)¹⁰²).

Something beside the feelings of the Rhine legions brought Verginius his second consulship. Otho's claim to power depended partly on his association with Nero. In age and appearance, style and taste – even taste in women, we are told – he was closest to the man whom he had helped to overthrow¹⁰³). In supplanting Galba Otho revived causes that had been Nero's. His main support was the Praetorian Guard, which Nero had abandoned¹⁰⁴). A section of the people too had cared for Nero, and still regretted him¹⁰⁵), and he had been popular in the eastern provinces¹⁰⁶). Addressing himself to a governor of Spain who had been prominent at Nero's court, Otho used the name Otho Nero; a hard fact which, however much was made of it by the governor, who abandoned him, remains a fact¹⁰⁷). For Otho, Verginius' high principles were doubly valuable, for they had kept him loyal to Otho's model¹⁰⁸). The true account of Vesontio and its aftermath, muffled during Gal-

100) Tac., i.53.3: *In Verginium favor cuicumque alii profuturus*. See Grassl, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 164 f.

101) Tac., i.8 f.; 12; 55 f.

102) Tac., ii.51; Plut., *Otho* 18.3 f.

103) Tac., i.13.3; cf. *Ann.* xiii.45 f. and Plut., *Otho* 19.2 ff. for Poppaea, with Townend, *Herm.* lxxxix 1961, 243 ff., for critical appraisal of the story.

104) Tac., i.23.1: *memoria Neroniani comitatus contubernalis*; cf. 87.2, and ii.46.2 f. Support came especially from rank and file: i.36.1; 38.3. Note also *Legio XIV Gemina: longa illis erga Neronem fides et erecta in Othonem studia* (Tac., ii.11.1).

105) Tac., i.4.3; 7.3; 16.3; 25.2; 72.1; 78.2. See Z. Yavetz, *Plebs and Princes*, Oxford, 1969, 123 ff.

106) B. Levick, *Roman Colonies in Southern Asia Minor*, Oxford, 1967, 166, n. 4, against Brunt, 558, n. 3.

107) Plut., *Otho* 3.1; Suet., *Otho* 7.1; cf. Tac., i.78.2. On the story see Townend, *art. cit.* (n. 91), 243, n. 3; for the desertion of Cluvius, Tac. i.76.1. Godolphin, *art. cit.* (n. 6), 327, thinks that he was forced to go over by his troops, but cf. Tac., ii.65.2, where he is well received by Vitellius. It was a freedman of Nero who was responsible for bringing Africa over to Otho: i.76.3.

108) Cf. Shotter (1967), 377: *To Otho Verginius was simply a status symbol*.

ba's principate, might be allowed to emerge once more. The story of the accident, which would always have been recognized as a thin veil designed to protect Verginius, could be dropped.

Although Verginius was offered the purple in succession to Otho after the first battle of Bedriacum, and in spite of the moment of danger when the victorious soldiers thought that a slave of his was attempting the life of Vitellius, the new champion of the Rhine legions, he survived. Verginius' loyalty was now something that could be taken for granted and his acquiescence in a régime valuable evidence of its legitimacy. It was in Vitellius' interest to keep him alive, and at the same time to appear, in some sense, and no doubt mainly for the benefit of the Roman populace, as the heir of Nero¹⁰⁹).

It was with the advent of the Flavians that Verginius' position became really dangerous once more, more so perhaps than at any time since he gave up his command on the Rhine. Vespasian was the choice of the Danubian and eastern legions¹¹⁰). The Rhine armies had lost out again, this time by backing Vitellius. In social status the new emperor was not much to be preferred to their old commander Verginius. Furthermore Verginius was assailable again on political grounds, having kept his armies loyal to an emperor who had now been permanently assigned to the tyrants' hell. As far as we know, Verginius held not a single office in the twenty-six years of Flavian rule¹¹¹). But Verginius had friends¹¹²),

109) Tac., ii.71.1 f.; 95.1 (*laetum foedissimo cuique quod inferias Neroni fecisset*). ii.55.1 has the followers of Vitellius posing as avengers of Galba, but that is in the flush of victory over Otho. Woodside's view, art. cit. (n. 36), 282 f., that the Batavian cohorts were alienated from Vitellius by his Neronian phase is hard to accept.

110) Suet., *Div. Vesp.* 6.2 f.; Tac., ii.79 ff., with 85 f. for the Balkan legions. See Nicols, op. cit. (n. 6), 78 ff; 95 ff.

111) Pliny, *Ep.* ii.1.8: *ad omnes honores meos ex secessibus accucurrit, cum iam pridem eius modi officii renuntiasset*; cf. Plut., *Galba* 10.7: τῷ Οὐεργινίου χρηστῷ δαίμονι . . . ἤδη τὸν ἄνδρα . . . εἰς βίον ἀκύμονα . . . ὑπεκτιθεμένῳ. Renunciation of Nero rather than honour to Galba should be stressed. For Vespasian and Galba's memory see Raoss (1958), 96 ff., citing, e. g., Kraay, 33 ff.; Mattingly, *C.R.E.B.M.* I, ccxii f.; II, xxvii; Grant, *Rom. Anniv. Issues*, Cambridge, 1950, 87, n. 3; 93, n. 4; 94, n. 1; 143, n. 10, who believe that Vespasian struck coins in Galba's memory: J. Gagé, *REA* liv 1952, 307 f. denies it; cf. P. A. Brunt, *JRS* lxxvii 1977, 104 f., with n. 51; but the absence of Galba's name from the *Lex de Imperio Vespasiani* does not indicate the early date of that document, merely the insignificance of Galba's short reign for purposes of creating precedent. It was under Otho that Flavius Sabinus was restored to the *Praefectura urbis* to which he had been appointed by Nero (Tab. 46.1). Tac., iii.85.1; iv.40.1 and Suet., *Galba* 23 suggest that Galba was differently estimated at Rome and by Vespasian.

112) Chilver, op. cit. (n. 16), 101 ff.

and he worked for his own survival. Since Otho's reign he had been saddled inescapably with responsibility for the destruction of Vindex's Gauls. But now he had a stroke of luck: the rebellion of 69-70 in Germany and Gaul and the setting up of an Imperium Galliarum independent of Rome¹¹³). During the Flavian period Verginius was very reticent about his achievements, but now he had another interpretation of the battle of Vesontio to offer, if it were necessary. He embodied it in his own epitaph: *Here lies Verginius Rufus, who championed the cause of empire, not for himself, but for his native land*¹¹⁴). Verginius here is not using the language of the constitution, of *res publica* and *libertas* but, as Mr. A. N. Sherwin-White¹¹⁵) and the late C. E. Stevens have both indicated, that of nationality, of *patria*. Verginius is contrasting Italy and Gaul. The story of 70 was that Vindex was the successor of Florus and Sacrovir, precursor of the men who created the Imperium Galliarum, that to have joined them would have been to join rebels against Rome, and that Verginius was thus completely justified in putting down his revolt.

Few now believe that Vindex, his fellow dynasts, or even the rank and file of his army had nationalist aims. The most that can be said is that there may have been some Gauls in the ranks who carried hatred of Rome in their hearts as well as pitchforks in their hands; and that if they had not had a lesson, and if they had still had Vindex's slaughtered twenty thousand when they joined Ci-

113) Revolt: Tac., iv. 54 ff. Hainsworth, *G & R* xi 1964, 134, suggests that Tacitus wanted to make Civilis look like Vindex; the evidence is poor; see below, n. 140. Daly, 77 f., likewise presents Tacitus' version as contrasting with that of Plutarch, Suetonius, and Dio and as showing Vindex as a nationalist and a latter-day Florus or Sacrovir. He is not well supported by the passage he cites (i.89.1).

114) Pliny, *Ep.* vi. 10.4 = ix. 19.1: *Hic situs est Rufus, pulso qui Vindice quondam/imperium adseruit non sibi, sed patriae*; cf. Dio lxviii.2.4 = B 188. Brunt, 539, n. 1, follows Mommsen, *Herm.* xiii 1878, 99 (= Ges. Schr. iv, 341), n. 4, in taking the ablative phrase in a purely temporal sense: Dio's νικήσας Οὐίνδου κατὰ τὸ κράτος οὐχ ἑαυτῷ περιεποιήσατο at least assigns Verginius responsibility for the victory. Hainsworth, loc. cit. (n. 113), also takes the epigram to praise Verginius' prowess, but enough doubt remains to make the arguments of van Ooteghem, art. cit. (n. 11), 22 f., following L. Paul in *RbM* liv 1899, 615, unacceptable unless *patriae* is given full weight. Kraay, 14 ff., accepts the version of A. D. 70, arguing that Verginius saw Vindex's revolt as a threat to the peace of Gaul. He accepts the meeting, but is firm that Verginius fought Vindex in the name of Nero.

115) Op. cit. (n. 18), 502. See Forcellini, s. v.: *Fere absolute adhibetur de natali solo, sive uniuersum de . . . loco quolibet, in quo nati sumus*. The point is not taken by Grassl, op. cit. (n. 2), 47 f.

vilis and the Germans, Rome would have had a harder time than she did in restoring order. But modern scholars have not been the first to criticize the story of A.D. 70. Cluvius Rufus anticipated them and told the world in his history that what Verginius destroyed was not a nationalist insurrection but Galba's chief support¹¹⁶).

If this analysis of the stratification of the story of Verginius is accepted as accounting for the quantity and diversity of the material to be found in the various sources, we must ask how the strata were laid down in written history, and how they reached the accounts that are preserved to us. I have criticized two separate parts of the tradition: first the claim that the battle of Vesontio was an accident, then the claim that Verginius repeatedly (*πολλάκις*) refused the Principate. These two claims do not necessarily belong together, and they do not necessarily stem from the same source. The first, I have argued, was put about in A.D. 68; to disseminate the second while Verginius was still alive, as Brunt has pointed out¹¹⁷), would have been unpardonable. On the other hand the claims are by no means inconsistent, and they are to be found both in Plutarch and in Dio; it would be satisfyingly economical to be able to ascribe them to the same source. We do not know the names of all the historians of the years 68–71, but three prime candidates have been brought into the field as the source that supplied material to the extant historians: Pliny the Elder, Cluvius Rufus, and Fabius Rusticus¹¹⁸). The story of the accident at Vesontio must have entered the tradition during the reign of Galba. Either it survived in oral accounts as one version of the affair¹¹⁹), came to be accepted as authentic by a written source favourable to Verginius and hostile to Nero, perhaps after the "Gallic nationalist" version was discredited by Cluvius Rufus, and so came to be used by Plutarch and Dio, or it was immediately taken up by an historian who was unable to relinquish it when it was repudiated under Otho and Vitellius and eventually replaced with the new Flavian interpretation. The first alternative is more probable; it is

116) Pliny, *Ep.* ix. 19.5.

117) Brunt, 339.

118) W. A. Spooner, *The Histories of Tacitus*, London, etc., 1891, 19 ff. Pliny: Townend, *AJP* lxxxv 1964, 337 ff., with Cluvius Rufus rejected; Fabius Rusticus: Syme, 180 f., 675 f.

119) Cf. Plut. Galba 6.4: διήλθε λόγος ὡς βουλομένων πάντων ἐπὶ νίκη τοσαύτη τὸν Οὐεργίνιον ἀναδέξασθαι τὴν ἡγεμονίαν . . .

unlikely that a written account of Verginius' activities was available before Galba's death in January of the following year made it obsolete. If it was in the work of Pliny the Elder that the first version eventually emerged, it allowed Pliny to adhere to his view of Vindex as *assertor ille a Nerone libertatis*¹²⁰) without discrediting the man who was to become his nephew's admired patron. Pliny withheld his history during his lifetime, disclaiming any wish to seem to flatter the dynasty¹²¹), but, as G. B. Townend has pointed out¹²²), it is more likely that the work was withheld because it was liable to displease important persons. Pliny's loyalty to the Flavian dynasty cannot be gainsaid¹²³), but he may have had unwelcome facts to relate about other leading and controversial figures of the age, and a contributory factor may have been the prominent position he had to give to Verginius Rufus in the events of 68–69. If Pliny recorded two refusals of power, the others could have accrued from oral sources, to be taken up by the later writers. Meanwhile, a different version of Verginius' activities was given by Cluvius Rufus¹²⁴), who ignored or repudiated both the story of the battle of Vesontio as an accident and the later attempt to represent Vindex as a Gallic nationalist. Cluvius' position as one of Nero's courtiers might make him more anxious than other writers to dissociate himself from that Princeps and to expose other men as embarrassingly loyal to him. One who had remained faithful both to Nero and to Otho could not expect to fare well in the work of a man who had abandoned both. Only after the downfall of the Flavian dynasty and the deaths of all the protagonists were Tacitus and Suetonius free to choose what versions they liked from the sources available, and to attach what significance they chose to the events of 68–69.

Verginius' reply to Cluvius: "You know that I did what I did in order that you people might be free to write whatever you fancied", is unexplicit and unincriminating, but it seems also to

120) Pliny, *NH* xx.160.

121) Pliny, *NH* i. 20.

122) Townend, 338 f.

123) For the elder Pliny's loyalty, see Spooner, *op. cit.* 20; G. Walser, *Rom, das Reich und die fremden Völker*, Baden-Baden, 1951, 125; Brunt, 539; K. Wellesley, *Tacitus, The Histories*, London, 1964, 162, n. 3.

124) For the writings of Cluvius, see Syme, 178 f.; 289 ff.; and, with a lower estimate, G. B. Townend, *Herm.* lxxviii 1960, 98 ff.; lxxxix 1961, 227 ff.; *Lat.* xx 1961, 338 ff.; *AJP* lxxxv 1964, 337 ff., to whom this paragraph is greatly indebted.

betray irritation: Verginius, the man of action, despised Cluvius Rufus and his writing, truthful or otherwise; for Cluvius was *vir facundus et pacis artibus, bellis inexpertus*¹²⁵). Particularly irritating Verginius might find the emphasis on *fides* of a man whose own well-judged shifts of allegiance probably influenced his historical judgment. But how could Verginius claim that loyalty to Nero made it possible for men to write, not the truth but, as G. B. Townend has pointed out¹²⁶), *whatever they fancied*? That is the extreme and final difficulty, posed by Brunt¹²⁷), with which we are now confronted. The answer is twofold. Verginius was in a corner, and irritated, and his reply might have had more animus against Cluvius than strict objectivity. But the answer itself is legalistic: however meritorious a prospective Princeps may be, if the fundamental right of the senate to choose has not been exercised, then *libertas* does not exist in the state.

Liberty was restored once again in A. D. 96¹²⁸). It found Verginius in retirement and in his eighties. Nerva had every reason to bring out a victim of Flavian oppression whose actions could be extolled as a defence of the senatorial *libertas* that was the watchword of the new régime; even Verginius' refusals of power could be trumpeted about at a time when he was unlikely to be given the opportunity to refuse again. For the third time Verginius attained the consulship, again in partnership with his Princeps. It was an honour unprecedented for *novi homines*, except for those with the closest and most loyal relations with the ruling dynasty – M. Agrippa, L. Vitellius, L. Licinius Mucianus, A. Fabricius Veiento.

Then came the economy commission of 97, to which Verginius feared he might be appointed¹²⁹). The five man commission was set up by Nerva to restrain expenditure. Its importance is a matter of debate, and with the aged Verginius as a possible member it may not have been intended to be a very dynamic body. A. N. Sherwin-White's view¹³⁰) is that it was merely to curb expen-

125) Tac., i.8.1; cf. iv. 43.1: *dives et eloquentia clarus*. For Verginius' answer, see Townend, 358.

126) Townend, 338.

127) Brunt, 539.

128) Tac., *Agr.* 3.1; Pliny, *Ep.* ix. 13.4; C.R.E.B.M. III, 3, no. 16 ff.; R.I.C. ii, 223, no. 7; 227, no. 64; 228, no. 76; ILS 274 = McCrum and Woodhead, Docs. 66.

129) Pliny, *Ep.* ii.1.9.

130) Sherwin-White, op. cit. (n. 18), 145.

diture by the Aerarium, which by now was little more than the city treasury of Rome. That is certainly in accord with the outcome: it imposed a new limit on expenditure on sacrifices, horse-racing, and other spectacles at Rome¹³¹). But an attempt had been made at the beginning of Vespasian's principate to set up an economy commission, and that had been vetoed in the Emperor's interest¹³²). Perhaps both commissions had a political as much as a financial purpose. The proposal of 70 had been taken as part and parcel of a plan to limit the powers of the new and absent Principes, and that was why it had been suppressed. If the commission was modelled on the proposal of 70 or at least was intended to bring it to mind it would not be surprising to find the champion of the senate's right invited to sit on it.

At the end of Verginius' career, then, came public recognition and success; after it a public funeral¹³³). Yet the recognition came from a quarter that was almost as ambiguous as the deed it honoured. Syme has inculcated a realistic and sombre view of the principate of Nerva¹³⁴), a ruler weak enough to be manipulated by the clique in the imperial household that had been responsible for the assassination of Domitian, bullied or by-passed by senate, Guard, and army commanders; what bound Nerva and Verginius was perhaps not merely high principle and danger shared under the previous dynasty, but also a common past as members of the court of Nero, where Nerva's verse made his name as a latter-day Tibullus¹³⁵) (let us not forget those spicy poems of Verginius) and his services against the Pisonian conspirators won him political honour equalled in Nero's principate only by those of Ofonius Tigellinus¹³⁶). Both men had been adherents of Otho, with whom Nerva was connected by marriage¹³⁷).

Only Tennyson on the plight of Sir Lancelot can do justice to the predicament of a man of principle under the Caesars. The vicissitudes of a man whose honour was so clearly rooted in dis-

131) Dio lxxviii.2.3 = B 188.

132) Tac., iv.9.1.

133) Pliny, *Ep.* ii.1.1.

134) Syme, 1 ff.

135) Martial, viii. 70; ix. 26.1; cf. Pliny, *Ep.* v. 3.5.

136) Tac., *Ann.* xv. 27.1; I.L.S. 273 = Smallwood, Docs. of Gaius, Claudius, and Nero 246: *ornamenta triumphalia*, statues on the Palatine and in the Forum (these in triumphal dress); see Syme, loc. cit.

137) Tac., ii.48.2; Suet., *Dom.* 10.2; Salvius Cocceianus, nephew of Otho; Cocceius in Plut., *Otho* 16.2.

honour bring it out as sharply as any other episode. Pliny complains ten years after his death that Verginius' monument, with its proud claim, was neglected¹³⁸). Once the revival of interest in Verginius occasioned by his return to public life and by his public funeral was over, men of the easier age of Trajan and Hadrian found the lesson of Verginius' rectitude either incredible or irrelevant. The association with Nero, Otho, and Nerva induced scepticism; and in the new century, under the régime of a man who, in a crisis of empire, passed from the governorship of Upper Germany to an excellent Principate¹³⁹), Verginius' achievement had become an embarrassment and an anachronism. Certainly a change may be detected in the attitude of Tacitus, who had delivered the funeral laudation¹⁴⁰). It has been said that what we know of Verginius' achievements is all part of a single story published by men who had reason to honour Verginius' memory, with no signs of a conflicting source¹⁴¹). Perhaps it is less a question of source than of attitude. What we have of the *Histories*, of which several books had been completed less than ten years after Verginius' death¹⁴²), is unclear on his actions and reticent as to his character. Tacitus' paradigm senators, M. Lepidus and Cn. Agricola¹⁴³), were not confronted by the decisions that faced Verginius, or with their consequences, but their steady loyalty and firm independence made them better models for senators than the man whose one great act could be interpreted as the result of a parvenu's blind loyalty to a despot; and whose motives, as Tacitus indicates, were

138) Pliny, *Ep.* vi.10.3.

139) So Townend, 341, n. 2 (on Tacitus); *contra* C. W. Mendell, Tacitus, Yale, 1957, 19.

140) Hainsworth, *G & R* xi 1964, 134, detects a certain tenderness to Verginius . . . in the ambiguous language used of Vindex and Vesontio . . . There is a subtle assimilation of Vindex to Civilis, which is the essential part of Verginius' claim to glory. He cites i.6.2; 8.2; 51.1; 53.2 (cf. 87.1); (more explicit) ii.94.2; iv.17.2; 57.2; 69.2. But the passages in the first group, as Hainsworth himself says, do not commit the historian, while the others are the utterances of persons with an interest in the assimilation. For the view that Tacitus' avoided writing about the year 68 for Verginius' sake see above, n. 9. I am unwilling to believe that Tacitus failed to give an account of 68 even partly to avoid damaging the memory of the man he had lauded: 69 was the year that brought the Flavians to power, whose reigns were the subject of the *Histories*.

141) Townend, 337 f. Raoss (1960), 91, sees Tacitus following a source less favourable to Verginius than Pliny, the source of Dio, Pliny the Younger, and (with some reservation) Plutarch. See also Grassl, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 48.

142) Syme, 118 f.

143) Syme, 121 ff.; 354; 526.

inaccessible to enquiry (it was Verginius who made them public for us). Suetonius leaves Verginius aside altogether; by the time Juvenal wrote his eighth Satire he had been removed to the dim safe pantheon of legend to stand alongside Vindex and Galba, the other heroes and Liberators of the war of 68¹⁴⁴).

This paper attempts to account for puzzles and divergences in the story of Verginius Rufus by assuming strata in its development. Whether this is correct or not, assiduous readers of the Verginius literature cannot have failed to notice strata in modern writings on the subject. Between twenty and thirty years ago, Kraay, Chilver, and Syme stated clearly, but perhaps not emphatically enough, that Verginius remained loyal to Nero to the end and that historians who asserted the contrary were glossing over that fact, or were misled by their sources. Since then the version of Plutarch and Dio has gained ground, and Verginius has been presented, almost without dissent, as a defector from Nero, usually ambivalent or hostile towards Vindex and Galba, sometimes merely incompetent. The difficulties have not all been resolved by this newer approach, and a reassessment is not out of place, especially if it can exploit and account for both ancient and modern failure to agree by tracing it to Verginius himself ¹⁴⁵).

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TITUS IN THE EAST, A.D. 70–71

The conclusion of the siege of Jerusalem marked the virtual end of the Judaeian campaign¹). Titus could well have returned to Vespasian and celebrated their joint triumph with suitable pomp

144) Juv., *Sat.* viii.221 f.

145) K. Wellesley, *The Long Year A. D. 69*, London, 1975, 9f., correctly stresses Verginius' ambiguousness, but his extremely severe judgment makes no allowance for changing circumstances.

1) For the details of the siege, see E. Schurer, *A History of the Jewish People in The Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C. – A.D. 135)*: Revised and edited by G. Vermes and F. Millar (Edinburgh, 1973), pp. 501 ff. and E. M. Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule from Pompey to Diocletian* (Leiden, 1976), pp. 316 ff. The Upper City was abandoned to the Romans on September 8th (Josephus, BJ 6.407).