

ANOTHER RHETOR FROM CALAGURRIS

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This paper suggest that *Fulvius Sparsus*, a *rhetor* known to Seneca the Elder and, thus, active in Rome during the early years of Empire, could be identified with (or as being a close relative of) *L. Fulvius Sparsus*, which was a city magistrate in Calagurris, in Hispania Citerior, at the beginning of Tiberius' times.

En este artículo se defiende la posible identificación de un *rhetor* del círculo de Séneca el Viejo (y por lo tanto, de inicios del período julio-claudio) con un magistrado homónimo de *Calagurris*, en Hispania Citerior, cuyo nombre aparece en una serie de la ceca local, datada a comienzos del reinado de Tiberio.

Fulvius Sparsus was a rhetorician who took part in some of the declamations Seneca the Elder attended. In fact, the *Controversiae* are our only extant source for this minor speaker; they contain about twenty five samples of Sparsus' declamation and some scanty references of biographical interest.¹ According with Seneca, "Sparsus autem dicebat uiolenter sed dure" and though the length of his surviving *dicta* —with exclusion of *Contr.* 4.8-10— is not enough for us to get an accurate picture of his style, it seems that he was fond of antitheses and oppositions resulting in affected —and sometimes unsavory— declamations.² Two instances may illustrate the point. When discussing the case of the unfaithful Vestal who survived her being thrown down from the rock, Sparsus' ingenuity summarized up *a superis deiecta, ab inferis non recepta, in cuius poenam saxum*

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¹ Quintilian mentioned (cf. *Inst.* 6.3.100) one Fulvius, who had been held by several scholars as being Fulvius Sparsus. But since Rademacher emended the passage, such a possibility is untenable, cf. K. Münscher, *RE* VII. s.v. *Fulvius* 279-80 n. 109.

² *Contr.* 10. *praef.* 11.3, but see now J. Fairweather, *Seneca the Elder* (Cambridge 1981), p. 10 who would like to emend *uiolenter* —the *lectio difficilior* preferred by most of Seneca's editors—, for *ualenter*, arguing that it seems hard to accept Seneca using two expressions of opprobium linked by *sed*. A comparative discussion on style of the various speakers recorded on the *Controversiae*, on H. Bornecque, *Les déclamations et les déclamateurs d'après Sénèque le Père* (Lille 1902) (on Sparsus, cf. p. 167) and Münscher, loc. cit., 280.

extruendum est [80](*Contr.* 1.3.3); and the lack of taste is nowhere better displayed than in the description of Flamininus' drunken orgy and its sequels.³

Still Sparsus was not an odd character. Seneca recalled him as being a man of good sense and as a skillful speaker —but not especially gifted (*Contr.* 1.7.15). We also know that Sparsus profited from the teachings of M. Porcius Latro,⁴ and how he appropriated the latter's ideas and *colores* and used them with a different wording, a practice Seneca certainly frowned at (*Contr.* 10. *praef.* 11). Notwithstanding this lack of inventiveness and innovation, Sparsus' declamation seems to have had strong appeal for his contemporaries as the number of his *dicta* quoted in Seneca's *Excerpta* seem to point to.

There is little evidence about Sparsus' life. Along with another colleague, he conducted a school of rhetorics (*Contr.* 10. *praef.* 11) but an accurate dating for his activities seems to be out of our reach, since the *Controversiae* renders little help and modern scholarship inclines to place him sometime during the Augustan period.⁵ Seneca's noticing that Sparsus often contended with one Iulius Bassus — a declaimer to whom Seneca's children were still able to hear performing —⁶ probably means that both speakers were active about A.D. 15. Furthermore, Quintilian records one Iunius Bassus whose personality is so similar to that of Seneca's Bassus that scholar have been inclined to identify the same man under both names.⁷ If that possibility is accepted, a more [81] convenient dating for Sparsus would be sometime during Augustus' late days or during Tiberius' reign.

Equally obscure is the question of Sparsus' *origo*. Seneca said nothing and modern scholars have paid little attention to such a point. It should be noted however what Syme

³ Compare *Contr.* 9.2.5 with Quint. *Inst.* 8.3.66 describing this very occasion according with Cicero. But a fair comparison of Fulvius Sparsus' style should be made among his peers: take for instance, *Contr.* 9.2.4.

⁴ On M. Porcius Latro, see L. Radermacher, *RE* xxii s.v. *Porcius*, 233-40 n. 49. This declaimer was closely tied to Seneca. Both were from Baetica and attended the same school, either somewhere in Spain (J. Fairweather, *op. cit.* 5), or at Rome (cf. M. Griffin, 'The Elder Seneca and Spain', *JRS* 62 (1972), 6; L. Sussman, *The Elder Seneca* (Leiden 1978) 20 ff.). Porcius Latro was probably born about 55 B.C. and according to Jerome (cf. *Chron.* 168 and R. Helm, *Philologus, Suppl.* 21-2 (1929), 69) he died in 4 B.C. Those datings have certain importance for Sparsus' own chronology for he was presumably among Porcius' students, cf. Münscher, *loc. cit.*, 280.

⁵ As Bornecque, *loc. cit.*, 25 has stressed, the attempts at dating any discussion of the *Controversiae* on the ground of the combined chronology of its participants are doomed by the anachronistic character of Seneca's work. The same could be said regarding the site or sites on which the declamations took place, although it is generally held that the discussions occurred in Rome. See Münscher, *loc. cit.*, 579 for Sparsus' chronology.

⁶ *Contr.* 1.2.21 and 10.1.13. and the references cited below in note 14. See also K. Gerth, *RE* X. s.v. *Iulius*, 178-180 n. 121 and L. Petersen, *PIR*² IV. 152 n. 204 .

⁷ Quint., *Inst.* 6.3.27, 6.3.57, and 6.3.74. The identification was suggested by Stein, *RE* X. s.v. *Iunius*, 966 n. 38, but not accepted by L. Petersen, *PIR*² IV. 330 n. 735. Bassus was a cognomen more popular among the Iulii than with the Iunii; a quick survey into the indexes of *CIL* VI. provides eight instances of Iulii Bassi against only one of Iunii.

has recently pointed out: the cognomen Sparsus, being 'preternaturally rare', occurs several times in Tarraconensis, and it would seem very plausible to hold the bearers of the name as people born in or coming from Spain.⁸ Griffin has accepted that, and —in the wake of Syme's suggestion— made of Fulvius Sparsus a Spaniard though she is quite aware of the weakness of an identification grounded on the likeness of the name alone.⁹

The name of Calagurris in Hispania Citerior is quite familiar to the scholars as Quintilian's birthplace. Many also will remember the Calagurritani's strong devotion toward Sertorius during his short-lived domination in Spain. Less known is the fact that during the Early Empire Calagurris was an important administrative center whose mint produced one of the most extensive series of local coinage of Spain.¹⁰ I [82] would like to draw some attention toward one of these coins, an *as*¹¹ on which Tiberius' laureate head to the right was engraved along with the inscription *Ti. Augus. Divi Augusti F. Imp. Caesar* surrounding it. On the obverse, the motive is a bull to the right, with *Huir* in front of it, *L. Saturnino* below, *M.C.I.* behind, and *L. Ful. Sparso* above.

The abbreviation *M.C.I.* on the reverse stands for *Municipium Calagurris Iulia*, the regular name of the city during the Early Empire. Except for Tiberius' odd titles, the

⁸ R. Syme, 'Pliny the Procurator', *HSCP* 73 (1969), 232 n. 116 = *Roman Papers*, (Oxford 1979), 769. Syme noticed three instances of Sparsus in *CIL*. One occurs in a inscription from Nemausus (*CIL* XII, 3558). The others are from the *Tarraconensis*: *CIL* II. 2648, Asturica Augusta, which records a Licinia Sparsi f. Procilla, married to a L. Lusius; and *CIL* II. 4198, Tarraco (= G. Alföldy, *Die Römischen Inschriften von Tarraco* (Berlin 1975), n. 320): [L.] L[i]cinius [Spar]sus, a provincial priest. Both people are probably related and they are commonly held as the ancestors of L. Lusius Sparsus, *cos. suff.* A.D. 156/57 (cf. L. Petersen, *PIR*² V. 115 n. 443). Other recorded occurrences of Sparsus are: the owner of the *domus Petiliana* (cf. Mart. 12.57), who could be identified with Sex. Iulius Sparsus, *cos. suff.* 88 (*AE*. (1949) 23; L. Petersen, *PIR*² IV. 281 n. 586) and with Iulius Sparsus, Pliny's friend (*Epist.* 5.5 and 8.3; see also R. Syme, 'People in Pliny', *JRS* 58 (1968), 149). Syme cited a coin from Osca on which one of the moneyers appears as *Sparsus*. The coin could be roughly dated between 2 B.C. and A.D. 14 (cf. A. Vives, *La Moneda Hispánica* IV. (Madrid 1924), 51 n. 7 and pl. CXXXVI). Curiously enough, Syme overlooked the evidence I am presenting in this paper.

⁹ M. Griffin, loc.cit., 12. In favor of such an hypothesis, she could press the fact that several of the people named in the *Controversiae* would seem to be of Spanish origin, as it was shown by the authoritative article of H. de la Ville de Mirmont, 'Les déclamateurs Espagnols au Temps d'Auguste et Tibère', *Bull.Hisp.* 12 (1910), 1-22; 14 (1912), 11-29, 229-43, 341-52; 15 (1913), 154-69, 237-67, 384-40 (especially relevant are pp. 237-69).

¹⁰ On Quintilian's birthplace, vid. Auson., *Prof. Burd.* 1.7 ed. Prete, and Hier., *Chron.* 211 ed. Helm 186. On early Calagurris' history, cfr. Liv., *Frag.* 91; Val. Max. 7.7.ext. 3; Flor. 2.10; and Oros. 5.23. Also see E. Hübner, *RE* III, 1327-8. *CIL* II. 2959, v. 6987 and xii. 3167 point toward Calagurris as being the seat of the *legati iuridici* of Tarraconensis, as R. Knox McElderry, *JRS* 9 (1919), 89 suggested some time ago. For a catalogue of the coins struck in Calagurris, see M.R. Ruiz-Trapero, *Las Acuñaciones Hispano-romanas de Calahorra*, (Madrid 1968), pp. 105-113.

¹¹ Vives, loc. cit., 99 n. 25 and pl. CLIX n. 5; Ruiz-Trapero, loc.cit., 112 n. 24.

remaining features of the coin conform to the standards of the mint.¹² The inscription on the obverse goes counterclockwise, occupying the whole perimeter of the coin, and the abbreviation TI. was placed just at the tip of the neck of Tiberius' bust. Since such a position often marks the beginning of the inscription in several other coins struck in Calagurris, Vives opted to read Tiberius' titles as above indicated. Since it surely results in a strange combination of titles and other scholars¹³ have preferred to read *Imp. Caesar Ti. Augus. Divi Augusti F.*, for which parallel titles may be found elsewhere.

Some time ago, Mommsen called attention to certain milestones from Africa Proconsularis, dated in A.D.14, on which Tiberius is designated as *Imp. Caesar Augusti. F. Augustus*, i.e. in the same fashion as Augustus (cf. *CIL* VIII, 10018 and 10023). An unique *dupondius* from Italica and several inscriptions from Africa¹⁴ provide a most common title, closer to that of Calagurris: *Imp. Ti. Caesar Augustus*. Lamentably none of those instances have an explicit dating, although it was Mommsen's contention that such titles remained in use until it was widely known that Tiberius had rejected the use [82] of *Imperator Caesar* as a part of his personal name.¹⁵ In any case, whether Vives' reading should be preferred, the coin from Calagurris may confidently be dated to the first year of Tiberius' rule.

The name of one of the moneyers of the coin immediately recalls that of the declaimer Fulvius Sparsus. The coincidence is even more striking bearing in mind how infrequent that cognomen is, and the dating of the coin gives further confirmation. Nevertheless, the identification of Seneca's rhetorician with Calagurris' officer cannot be pressed further, for we neither know the declaimer's praenomen nor his precise chronology, but it is very reasonable to hold them as somehow related .

The surviving information about Calagurris is painfully scarce. Only two inscriptions are recorded as found in the whereabouts of Calagurris --and both concern two non-Spanish soldiers who presumably died there while billeted during one of Augustus' campaigns in Northwestern Spain (*CIL* II 2983-4). Another inscription from Tarraco honors a Calagurritanus who had served his term of office in a distinguished manner (*CIL* II 4245). The most valuable information about the city comes from her coins. They give us the

¹² M. Grant, *From Imperium to Auctoritas* (Cambridge 1946) 165, and Ruiz-Trapero, loc. cit., 112 n. 24

¹³ So A. Banti-L. Simonelli, *Corpus Numorum Romanorum* X (Firenze 1976), p. 44 n. 514, following Cohen's suggestions.

¹⁴ Vives, loc. cit., 127 n. 9 and pl. clxviii 8, and F. Chaves, *Las Monedas de Itálica*, (Sevilla 1973) n. 144. In this particular case, there is no doubt that *Imperator Caesar* was intended to be the first part of the name. The inscriptions are *CIL* VIII. 10492 (with Mommsen's supplements, cf. 11052), from Tacapa, Africa Proconsularis; 685 (with add. 11912), from Mograwa, Africa Byzacena, and 26518, from Thugga, Africa Proconsularis.

¹⁵ T. Mommsen, *Staatrecht* II-2, 769 n. 2. M. Grant, *Aspects of the Principate of Tiberius* (New York 1950), 24, cites among other instances, this very coin from Calagurris. For the fanciful titles used by some of the most conspicuous characters of the Late Republic and Early Empire, see R. Syme, *Historia* 7 (1957), 172-88.

names of 34 moneyers, their offices, and sometimes, a dating for the *collegium* . Even so, the standing roster only covers the Augustan and Tiberian period.

Considering the available evidence, little could be said about the moneyer Sparsus, his family and station. There was a C. Fulvius Rutilus who also served as a moneyer sometime during the Augustan period,¹⁶ and most likely, he was a relative of L. Fulvius Sparsus. If this is accepted, it points toward the Fulvii as being one of the leading families in town and it surely helps to explain the presence of the declaimer in Rome among the exclusive circle of people for whom declamation was a fashionable activity. That an important number of Spaniards were in Rome at that time needs no further comment. People like Seneca the Elder and Porcius Latro, Martial and Quintilian found their way from Hispania to Rome. Fulvius Sparsus, a lesser declaimer from Tarraconensis, should be included among [84] the Spaniards living or working at Roma during the early years of the Empire. Being from a sufficiently well-to-do family as to afford the local *cursus honorum*, he rather attempted to pursue a rhetorician career in Rome. Ultimately, that was what his more famous countrymen, L. Valerius Martialis and Q. Fabius Quintilianus did a generation later.

¹⁶ Vives, op. cit, 99 n. 21 and pl. clix 1. I am dating the officer on the ground of Augustus' titles which allows a dating between 2 B.C. and A.D. 14.