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THE EPITAPH OF NAUCELLIUS

The senator and poetaster Iulius (or Iunius) Naucellius is sufficiently well-known as the recipient of a group of Symmachus' letters (III.10-16, and possibly IX.110) and as the author of several of the *Epigrammata Bobiensia*, first published in 1955 (*PLRE* I, Naucellius). From these we can confidently assume that his family came from Syracuse, that he himself lived in Rome, and that he retired to Spolegium where he survived to a grand and productive old age; he was known to Symmachus as both a poet and a translator from the Greek (III.11 and 13). The main autobiographical text is *Epigr. Bob.* 8b, of which the following lines are particularly important:

.
 et pater et genitrix larque Syracosius; 4
 eloquium e Latio, studium non molle, Latinis 5
 excultum numeris Argolicaque lyra; 6
 praenomen ductum ex atavis; lar in urbe Quirini; 9

Despite the flurry of interest which greeted the publication of the epigrams, no one seems to have connected the Naucellian poems in the collection with what is clearly a companion piece preserved in very fragmentary state on an inscription from the basilica of St. Paul at Rome. The best text is that of Diehl, *ILCV* 725 (= *ICUR* I.957b = *ICUR* n.s. II.5017 = *CLE* 1353):

725 [. . . pat]re cretus Hyg[in]o
 [. . . . Sy]racosis
 [. . . . Nau]cellius hoc fu[it . . .]
 [. . . . pr]otinus ex atavis
 5 [. . . . nomen] Germanis nobile e[unctis]
 [. . . . term]inat oceanus
 [. . . . puer]um me Roma Latin[is]
 [. . . . ue]ribus erudit.

CE 1353 RO Inscr. chr. Rom. 1967b qui uidit et suppleuit cum Bue. in coenobio s. Pauli extant fragmenta tabulae magnae, quam anno fere 427 incisam colligit Ro. in tabula aenea prostat titulus a. 512 uel 511 (infra ad 5770). I lare Ro ex CE 1530 A 3. 2 nomen frangit metrum, nisi hex. est ; [Nau]cellius ego: uelut Marcellius Bue. aeuo? 5 nobile corpus Ro, 'minus probabile germanis' Bue. 8 multum deesse censet Bue.

Everything suggests that this is the epitaph of the poet, composed by himself or a close imitator: content above all, but also metre, vocabulary (not just "ex atavis", but possibly "lare" in line one), the fragmentary name (first suggested by Diehl), and the date (De Rossi emphatically connected the lettering of this inscription with that of *ICUR* I.654, also from St. Paul's, dated to 427). Thus a small fragment may be added to the exiguous corpus of a very minor poet. Two interesting points of history emerge (beyond the dubious restoration of *patre...Hygino* in line one). First, the connection with Germany, prompted perhaps by the civil or military service there of Naucellius or one of his Sicilian ancestors. (With a man of letters, one thinks immediately of an association with Ausonius and the court at Trier.) And second, something not apparent in either his own verse or the letters from Symmachus, that Naucellius was (or at least died) a Christian.