

CONSULS AND *RES PUBLICA*

Holding High Office in the Roman Republic

EDITED BY

HANS BECK, ANTONIO DUPLÁ,
MARTIN JEHNE
AND
FRANCISCO PINA POLO



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CHAPTER 9

*The consul(ar) as exemplum: Fabius Cunctator's
paradoxical glory*

Matthew B. Roller

INTRODUCTION

Unus homo nobis cunctando restituit rem.
Noenum rumores ponebat ante salutem.
Ergo postque magisque viri nunc gloria claret.
Ennius, *Annales* fr. 363–5 Skutsch

One person, by delaying, restored the commonwealth for us.
He did not set people's criticisms (sc. of him) before safety.
Therefore it is afterward, and more, that the hero's glory now shines out.

These three hexameter verses, composed probably in the 170s or early 160s BC, come from Ennius' historical epic, the *Annales*. They constitute the earliest surviving reference to Q. Fabius Maximus Verrucosus "Cunctator," one of the leading Roman politicians and generals of the Second Punic War.¹ This description of Fabius was among the best-known passages of Ennius' poem in antiquity, to judge from the frequency with which later authors quote or allude to it. Its earliest such appearance dates to 59 BC, when Cicero quotes the first verse in a way that shows it was already proverbial;² Cicero also quotes all three verses in a pair of texts dating to 44 BC – our only sources for the entire set. In subsequent authors there are numerous further quotations, paraphrases, or echoes of the first or second verse.⁴ Scholars have observed that these verses are already in the business of mythmaking, of manufacturing Fabius and his strategy of "delay" as

¹ Consul 233, 228, 215, 214, 209; censor 230; dictator 11 217. On the date of Ennius' *Annales*, see Rebuffat 1982; Skutsch 1985, 4–6.

² Cic. *Att.* 2.19.2; discussion below. Cic. *Sen.* 10; *Off.* 1.84; discussion below.

⁴ The first verse is recognizable in Livy 2.26.9; Verg. *Aen.* 6.846; Aug. *apud* Suet. *Tib.* 21; Ov. *Fast.* 2.242. These authors, like Cicero, certainly read the *Annales*. It also appears in Sen. *Ben.* 4.27.2; Ser. *Aen.* 8.645; Macrobius 6.1.23; and Serenus, *Med.* 1094, who may not have read Ennius directly but found the verse in Cicero, Virgil or another intermediary. Looser paraphrases or fainter echoes, especially of the first verse, are about as numerous. Readers will disagree, however, whether a given passage constitutes an "echo," and if so, how close: for lists of candidates, see e.g. Stanton 1971, 52–6; Skutsch 1985, 529– ; Elliott 2009, 533.

an *exemplum* for subsequent Roman aristocrats. For the speaker of these verses places Fabius' "delaying" in the past, and compares its reception by Fabius' contemporaries with its reception in later eras. The second verse, in particular, hints at a conflict of values and evaluation: Fabius pursued safety (*salus*) and disregarded criticism (*rumores*), presumably propagated by contemporaries who opposed his approach. The third verse, however, indicates that the later view of Fabius' deeds was positive: it is "now" (*nunc*, in the speaker's present time), and "later" (*post*, after Fabius' deeds), that the "glory of the hero" (*virī . . . gloria*, both words conferring praise) "shines forth the more" (*magis . . . claret*). These claims, in turn, explain and corroborate the approbative declaration of the first verse, that Fabius "restored the commonwealth for us," where *nobis* indicates the importance of Fabius' achievement for the speaker and his generation.

Whether this speaker is "Ennius" the epic narrator, or (perhaps more likely) a Roman general who appears as a character in the poem and adduces Fabius to justify his own circumspection,⁵ it is these verses' overtly exemplifying aim that interests me here. During the middle republic, an ethos of service to the commonwealth (*res publica*) was pervasive in the Roman aristocracy and manifested itself in intense competition for status and honor through actions performed in the civic sphere. Under such conditions, it is inevitable that the consulship (along with the dictatorship, and a few other posts held by consulars) emerged as the institution *par excellence* for generating exemplary social actors. As the chief regular magistrates of the *res publica*, consuls were automatically leading actors in the military, legislative, judicial, electoral and other political arenas that constituted the civic sphere. Since warfare was the most valorized arena of civic performance and aristocratic competition in this era, consuls – along with dictators and ex-consuls whose commands had been extended – were objects of especially intense interest in their role as military commanders. Their performance in preparing and leading troops into battle was observed, evaluated, commemorated and subsequently invoked as a standard that later commanders might strive to surpass, or against which they might be measured. The wide array of commemorative media to which claims of military success were entrusted – military decorations, triumphal processions, honorific

The manuscripts of Cic. *Sen.* and *Off.* read *non enim* at the start of the second verse; Lachmann's restoration of *noenum* (metrical and Ennian) for Ennius himself tends to be cautiously accepted by modern editors. If this conjecture is correct, it remains unclear whether the corruption stood already in Cicero's text of Ennius (hence *non enim* is the correct Ciceronian reading) or occurred later, in the Ciceronian manuscript tradition: discussion by Skutsch 1985, 531 and Powell 1988, 125.

⁵ For these verses' possible original contexts, see Stanton 1971, 52; Rebuffat 1982, 157–65; Skutsch 1985, 530–1.

statues and nomenclature, dedications of spoils, the erection of temples or other structures paid for by spoils, the narration of pertinent achievements through oral performance (as in a funeral *laudatio*) or in written form (funerary epitaphs, historiography, epic poetry) – all attest the ardent desire to spread positive representations of a general’s prowess far and wide among contemporaries and posterity, and to establish him as a model or standard (an *exemplum*) in the present and for posterity.

The figure of Fabius is in some respects a typical product of this “exemplary” discourse.⁶ In his first consulship, the tradition reports, he defeated the Ligurians and celebrated a triumph. Virtually no information is transmitted regarding his second consulship, though his iteration as consul after just five years suggests that his contemporaries esteemed him highly. His selection as dictator in 217, following the Roman military disaster at Lake Trasimene, was likely due – at least in part – to his prior military success, as well as to his seniority and experience as a two-time consul.⁷ In his third and fourth consulships, during the darkest days of the Second Punic War, he supposedly enjoyed modest military successes in the struggle against Hannibal. In his fifth consulship he recaptured the important city of Tarentum, which had defected to Hannibal several years earlier; for this victory he received a second triumph. A figure known to contemporary and later Romans as having held five consulships, two dictatorships (one extremely crucial), two triumphs, a censorship and other notable honors as well makes for an exemplary Roman *exemplum*.⁸

At the heart of the Fabian *exemplum*, however, is an unusual moral ambiguity, and it is this aspect that Ennius’ verses (and much of the subsequent tradition) address. For during the six months of his dictatorship in 217, according to the tradition, Fabius confronted Hannibal not by looking to initiate a large-scale set battle, but by avoiding it: he merely shadowed Hannibal’s movements, thus “delaying” a major confrontation. In purposefully not pursuing what would ordinarily be considered a golden opportunity to lead Roman troops into battle and defeat a particularly fearsome and dangerous enemy, he deprived himself and his soldiers of the chance to display valor in battle, collect spoils, celebrate a triumph, win military decorations and gain the associated renown. He was consequently accused of lacking the virtues and capacities required in a commander. The Ennian passage,

⁶ On exemplarity as a discourse, and on its characteristics, see Roller 2004, 1–7 and *passim*.

⁷ On the significance of early iteration, see Beck 2005, 280–1. Fabius had also previously been appointed dictator – probably in 221 to conduct elections – but abdicated due to an ill omen: Val. Max. 1.1.5.

⁸ Indeed, this enumeration of Fabius’ achievements largely replicates Augustus’ own list, as given in the Forum Augustum *elogium* – a text overtly out to exemplify its honorand: see below. Recent discussion of Fabius’ early career in Beck 2005, 275–81 and Feig Vishnia 2007 (alternative view).

as noted above, alludes to contemporary criticism in the word *rumores*. Yet it quickly avers that “our” (later) verdict on Fabius is positive. Built into the tradition from its beginning, then, is the supposition that Fabius’ actions admitted and received conflicting, even contradictory, moral evaluations from contemporaries and posterity. Moreover, the tradition holds that Fabius justified his unorthodox actions and strategy by criticizing conventional military values and action, and invoking an alternative set of values instead. The collective judgment upon him supposedly changed as his contemporaries, initially dismissive of Fabius’ novel ethics, in time swung around to his viewpoint.

In this paper I examine the moral complexities of the Fabian tradition. I trace the representation of his “delaying” strategy, of its contemporary and subsequent reception, and of the competing value discourses and ethical paradoxes by which it is articulated, in a variety of republican and Imperial texts. My analysis is “synchronic” in that I move thematically through the constituent elements of the discourse about Fabius, juxtaposing texts from all eras in my discussion of each thematic element. Certainly different texts, which have different rhetorical aims, emphasize different aspects of this discourse.⁹ Yet almost all crucial elements are already present, explicitly or implicitly, in the three verses of Ennius quoted above, and I cannot discern any systematic chronological development or shifts within this discourse as manifested in surviving texts. Moreover, the debates represented in our sources possibly bear no relation to the debates that actually took place among Fabius’ contemporaries regarding his strategy; I make no claims for their historical correctness. I am interested, rather, in the ways Romans of later eras imagine those debates to have played out, and in the value conflicts that these (imagined) debates put on display. It is precisely, I suggest, these conflicts of value and judgment at the heart of the Fabius legend that make him a useful *exemplum*; these offer Roman social actors for centuries thereafter a touchstone with which to think about the value conflicts of their own worlds.

THE ETHICS OF DELAY

Late in June of 217 BC, the story goes, the awful news reached Rome that a consular army had been crushed at Lake Trasimene and that the consul C. Flaminius had been killed. In the wake of this disaster Fabius was

⁹ See, for instance, Ridley 2000, 29–31 on the divergent representations of Fabius by Polybius and Livy (citing work by Wilhelm Hoffmann that I have not been able to consult). On Plutarch’s representation see Beck 2002, 477–80 (and *passim*); on distinctive aspects of Silius, see below, n. 65.

appointed dictator and M. Minucius Rufus master of the horse,¹⁰ with instructions to secure the city against Hannibal's advance. Fabius ordered a consultation of the Sybilline Books, offered games and sacrifices and vowed a "sacred spring" (*ver sacrum*).¹¹ Then he took command of the remaining consular army, raised fresh troops and marched off in pursuit of Hannibal, who by then had moved into southern Italy. Once in contact with the enemy, Fabius began to implement his distinctive strategy of non-engagement. As Hannibal's army pillaged and burned, Fabius neither offered nor accepted set battle, and the tradition contains divergent accounts of the extent to which he intervened even to protect Roman and allied property from Hannibal's depredations. The tradition is unanimous, however, in asserting that he kept his own soldiers in camp, apart from well-organized foraging parties and raids on enemy foraging parties that took inadequate precautions. He limited himself to shadowing Hannibal's movements, pitching camp always within sight of the enemy, yet in the hills to evade the cavalry.¹² This strategy, pursued throughout the six months of his dictatorship, earned Fabius the nickname *cunctator*, "delayer."

The tradition justifies Fabius' strategy in a variety of ways. The overarching justification, manifesting a widespread Roman idea about the fickleness of *fortuna* in war, is that Hannibal's good fortune and the Romans' bad fortune (i.e. Hannibal's victories over three different Roman armies and commanders in consecutive battles) are bound to change; therefore, it makes sense to look for evidence that this change is at hand – a particularly advantageous situation, for example – before engaging him. Other, more pragmatic explanations, though varied, tend to support and underpin this overarching justification. For instance, several texts ascribe to Fabius the view that his inexperienced army can best be trained up through skirmishing and micro-engagements; the implication is that Fabius does not believe his raw recruits can (yet) win a set battle against Hannibal's hardened veterans. This idea is encapsulated in widespread assertions that Fabius wanted, above all, to keep his soldiers safe, and not to lose any more than absolutely necessary. This aim finds its *mise-en-scène* in the story of Fabius saving the legions commanded by his then co-dictator Minucius, after the latter disastrously fell into a Hannibalic trap and his soldiers faced

¹⁰ On the unusual constitutional circumstances of these appointments, already probed by Livy (22.8.5–7; 22.31.8–11), see Hartfield 1982, 495–6; Lesiński 2002; Beck 2005, 284–6.

¹¹ Livy 22.9.7–11; Plut. *Fab.* 4.4–7; Sil. 7.74–89; on the *ver sacrum* see below.

¹² Livy 22.12. –10; Polyb. .89–90; Plut. *Fab.* 5.1– ; Sil. 7.90–5, 123– .

annihilation.¹³ Moreover, several texts ascribe to Fabius the view that, while his own army was well-provisioned and supported, Hannibal's would weaken and degrade for want of money and supplies, as well as from the small but consistent losses that accompany endless raiding and skirmishing. This view presupposes – as the tradition asserts – that no Roman allies were yet going over to Hannibal, hence that his supplies had to be procured through raiding. Indeed, several texts assert that, at certain points during Fabius' dictatorship and thereafter, Hannibal was so pressed for supplies that he feared he could not defend his own camp, or was compelled to attempt ever more risky ruses in hopes of escaping the Roman noose, or contemplated withdrawing from Italy altogether.¹⁴ All of this tells for the long-awaited shift in the fortunes of the war: the Romans' chances are improving, and the Carthaginians' are worsening, as Fabius' strategy plays out. By the end of his six-month term as dictator, he can be represented as having all but defeated Hannibal despite never having come to blows, and the following year – when he holds no command – he can be imagined as saying to the consul Aemilius Paullus that Hannibal will wither away or leave Italy provided nobody offers him battle that year.¹⁵ The explanations of Fabius' strategy thus bifurcate into two broad alternatives: that Fabius “delays” joining battle because he awaits an advantageous opportunity; or, that his very avoidance of battle stands to defeat Hannibal in and of itself.¹⁶ Whether any such explanation is historically correct is, again, uncertain.¹⁷ What is certain is that, as the Romans elaborated the Fabian *exemplum* in

¹³ Waiting for a change in fortune: Livy 22.12.2, 10; Sil. 7.9–11, 90– , 234–47. Training and encouraging his soldiers through skirmishing: Polyb. .90.4; Livy 22.12.10; Sil. 7.90–5. Not confident that his soldiers can defeat Hannibal's: Polyb. .89.5–8; Polyaeus 8.14.1; Zonar. 8.25. The idea that the safety of soldiers and commonwealth was Fabius' overriding concern is already implied in the Ennian *salutem* (fr. 364 Sk.); it is spelled out and thematized in Polyb. .89.2; Livy 22.12.8–10; 22.25.15; Val. Max. .8.2; Sil. 6.619–26; 9.52–5 (and *passim*); Frontin. *Str.* 4.6.1; Cass. Dio fr. 57.9–10. This “safety” is contrasted with Minucius' rashness at Livy 22. . . ; Sil. 7.396–400, 705–45; Plut. *Fab.* 10.7; 13.7 (see below for “safety” in relation to “the good of the commonwealth”).

¹⁴ Polyb. .90.2– ; Livy 22.15.2; 22.24.9–10; 22.32.1– ; 22.40.7–8; 22.43.2–4; Frontin. *Str.* 1.5.28; Sil. 8.11–15; App. *Hann.* 12.49–13.56; Plut. *Fab.* 5.1, 4; *Mor.* 195C–D; Zonar. 8.26.

¹⁵ Livy 22.39.13–15; Plut. *Fab.* 14.6.

¹⁶ In Beck's formulation (2000, 80), the question is whether Fabius becomes the *cunctator* through “delaying” an eventual, conventional military performance, or whether his “delaying” is itself the performance. While the traditional justifications of Fabius' strategy admit both views, the latter strand – linking Fabius with the idea of never, on principle, joining battle – predominates. See below on “winning without fighting.”

¹⁷ Erdkamp (1992, 132–6) and Beck (2000, 86–7) point out that the rich Campanian countryside should have furnished Hannibal with abundant provisions, and that a lack of local allies should have mattered little in this respect. Erdkamp is also skeptical about Livy's claim that the Roman cavalry effectively harried the Carthaginians (1992, 129–31 – though Erdkamp's grounds for preferring Polybius over Livy in general are unacceptable).

later years, they applied their own ingenuity and capacity for sympathetic historical imagination to make sense of what could, at first sight, seem a quite un-Roman way of confronting a formidable enemy.

Indeed, the tradition asserts that Fabius' contemporaries heavily criticized his strategy. A review of the Roman economy of social prestige is helpful for understanding the terms of this criticism. In general – and especially outside of philosophical contexts – moral values at Rome are ascribed on the basis of actions performed before an audience of witnesses, whose judgments transmit the moral views of the community at large. These witnesses consider how consequential an action is for the community, then assign it positive or negative value in one or more moral categories that they deem relevant to the circumstances of the performance.¹⁸ Warfare, of course, is an arena in which actions carry weighty consequence for the community. In military contexts, from at least the middle republic onward, the moral/ethical category of *virtus* is central: aristocratic officers and cavalrymen, as well as lower-status legionary soldiers, seek to have this value, above all others, ascribed to themselves. *Virtus* is associated primarily with displaying aggression in combat. One seeks to be observed and acknowledged by one's fellow soldiers and officers, and if possible by members of the broader community, as fighting with great physical courage. Military decorations monumentalize spectacular deeds of valor, along with the collective positive evaluation accorded to the warriors who perform them. The high social value associated with *virtus* reflects how closely military success is linked with collective welfare in this period. *Gloria*, meanwhile, is the positive reputation one gains from having *virtus* and/or other positive moral values ascribed to oneself: it is the praise that circulates within the community when one is judged to have performed outstandingly in one or another ethical category. The more glorious one is, the greater one's social value and prestige. This economy of social prestige, especially as it involves *virtus* and military achievement, was itself an important driver of Roman warfare and imperialism during the middle and late republic, as scholars have long noted.¹⁹ Yet it also accounts for the perceived problem

¹⁸ On this aspect of Roman moral discourse, see Roller 2004, 1–10 (and *passim*).

¹⁹ McDonnell (2006a, 12–71) shows how military achievement is conceptually and ideologically central to the moral category *virtus* (though his discussion conflates conceptual/ideological priority with temporal priority). For the display, attribution and place of *virtus* in the economy of social prestige among aristocrats, see Roller 2001, 20–5, 97–108; for its place in the honor-community of (non-elite) Roman soldiers, see Lendon 1997, 243–52. On the link between individual military achievement, social prestige and Roman militarism in the republic, see the classic discussions of Earl 1967, 11–43 and Harris 1979, 9–53. On the sources of *gloria* (chiefly military) in the middle to late republic see

with Fabius' strategy. By avoiding significant military clashes, he sharply limits opportunities for legionary soldiers, as well as aristocratic officers and cavalrymen, to display *virtus* and gain *gloria*; thus the traditional signposts to the accumulation of social value are pulled up and thrown away.

What to make of waging war in such a manner? One way Fabius' contemporaries respond, the tradition asserts, is to label his refusal to pursue military *gloria* in the expected way as cowardice, the vice opposed to *virtus*. From the very outset, the tradition asserts, Fabius' strategy found critics: Polybius writes that Fabius was at first generally despised and reputed to be cowardly and dumbstruck in the face of danger, while Polyaeus alleges similar ill-repute among his fellow senators. Plutarch adds that Fabius' own soldiers spoke ill of him, and the enemy too considered him cowardly – all except for Hannibal, who alone understood how formidable Fabius was proving himself to be.²⁰ Minucius, Fabius' master of the horse, favors a more conventional strategy of aggressive pursuit and risking battle. He and his supporters in Rome feed the prevailing discomfort with Fabius' strategy by stigmatizing him as mean and cowardly, contrasting this with Minucius' own desire to display and vindicate traditional military values. This contrast is merely strengthened by Minucius' success in a skirmish he conducts, contrary to Fabius' express orders, while Fabius is away.²¹ At this point a tribune in Rome, Metilius, proposes elevating Minucius to the unprecedented rank of co-dictator; Livy gives Metilius a speech in which he develops further the contrast between the two commanders and their strategies. Metilius argues that the soldiers, along with Minucius himself, had been held by Fabius as if in detention or captivity, and that their weapons had been all but taken away from them. Only upon Fabius' departure did they break out and rout the enemy. Fabius is implied to be virtually the enemy himself, imprisoning Roman soldiers to prevent them from displaying their military valor and dispatching Hannibal. Metilius and Minucius thus hold that Roman soldiers are capable of and eager for

Harris 1979, 18–34; for the word's semantics, Thomas 2002, 28–31, 38–42. Habinek (2000, 267–77) discusses the “zero-sum” quality of *gloria*. The impression that *gloria* is chiefly an aristocratic concern (Harris 1979, ; Habinek 2000, 267) may be due to the elite orientation of most of our texts: but see Caes. *B Civ.* 2.39. ; *B Gal.* 7.50.4; [Caes.] *Hisp.* 23.8 for its attribution to centurions and other non-elite soldiers; also Plaut. *Stich.* 281 for its (parodic) attribution to slaves.

²⁰ Polyb. .89. ; Polyaeus 8.14.1; Plut. *Fab.* 5. . The gibe that Fabius was Hannibal's “pedagogue” (Plut. *Fab.* 5.5; Diod. Sic. 26 fr. .1) turns on a stereotyped image of the child-minder, a slave, following and observing his young master. Yet at Plut. *Marc.* 9.7 Hannibal says he *fears* Fabius because, like a pedagogue, he keeps him from doing harm: another way in which Hannibal is portrayed as understanding Fabius' effectiveness, even when Romans do not.

²¹ Minucius' views and words about Fabius: Livy 22.14.14; App. *Han.* 12.51–2; Polyb. .90.6 (where Minucius' desire to “risk battle,” διακινδυνεύειν, contrasts with the “risk,” κίνδυνος, that Fabius, in his concern for safety, seeks to avoid: cf. Cass. Dio fr. 57.11; Polyb. .94.10.

victory, if only Fabius would allow it.²² At any rate, Minucius' elevation to co-dictator is usually represented as the people's rebuke to Fabius for manifesting the wrong values, and its reward to Minucius for displaying the right ones.²³

A second criticism, related to but distinct from the question of military values, is that Fabius' strategy is dishonorable. By leaving the property of colonists, Italian allies and others at Hannibal's mercy to plunder and burn as he moves without hindrance through Italy, the Romans lose face and forsake their obligations. Indeed, Hannibal is said to inflict great losses and suffering on allied cities and colonies during Fabius' dictatorship, among them Beneventum, Telesia and Sinuessa, though for the moment all colonies and allies remained loyal.²⁴ In Livy, Minucius makes a speech lamenting that the army has come only to watch the slaughter and fiery destruction of the allies and Roman colonists at Sinuessa; his invocation of the *pudor* the soldiers should feel for the city's suffering implies the moral discredit that accrues to their failure to intervene.²⁵ Plutarch gives Minucius similar remarks in shorter compass.²⁶ In Minucius' and his supporters' view, then, Roman honor demands that the army be seen to be trying to protect Italy from Hannibal. This requires military confrontation, aggression, daring and risk – the very qualities that distinguish men of valor, such as himself, from cowards. The tradition ultimately rejects the accusation of cowardice against Fabius (as we will see below). The question of honor, however, seems more troublesome to the authors who narrate Fabius' dictatorship. Perhaps with an eye toward this problem, some texts credit Fabius with doing his best in this regard, insofar as difficult conditions allow: Polybius, in his own voice, says Fabius wanted the allies to think he was not abandoning the countryside, while Appian avers that Fabius kept Hannibal from besieging any cities or ravaging the countryside.²⁷ Dio, too, reports that, when the people appointed Fabius dictator, they were looking to their own survival and gave the allies no help, though later took consideration

²² Livy 22.25.6–9. Cf. Sil. 7.504–10. In Plut. *Fab.* 8.4, Metilius accuses Fabius of treason (προδοσία) as opposed to cowardice (μαλακία/ἀνανδρία); likewise Zonar. 8.26. In Polyb. .103.2, the Romans conclude that the problem is not cowardice (ἀποδειλίασις) by the soldiers, but over-caution (εὐλάβεια) by the commander.

²³ Polyb. .103.1–4; Livy 22.26.5; Sil. 7.511–18; App. *Han.* 12.51–2; Plut. *Fab.* 10.1; Zonar. 8.26. Indeed, Fabius' own self-justification is cast in his face in Plut. *Fab.* 7. . After Hannibal escapes a Fabian trap by the stratagem of tying torches to the horns of cattle, Fabius is mocked for being bested in the one arena where he claimed superiority, namely judgment and foresight (γνώμη, πρόνοια). Likewise Nep. *Han.* 5.2.

²⁴ E.g. Polyb. .90.7–14. ²⁵ Livy 22.14.4–5, 7–8; cf. 22.13.10–11.

²⁶ Plut. *Fab.* 5.6. ²⁷ Polyb. .92.6; App. *Han.* 12.50; 13.57.

for their safety and hence loyalty.²⁸ Thus certain texts seek to mitigate the charge that Fabius' strategy is dishonorable, even if they cannot conjure from it a full-scale defense of Italy. The objections to Fabius' strategy, then, are fundamentally moral and social. Judging audiences evaluate his actions negatively in regard to the city's honor, his own *virtus* and the *virtus* of his soldiers and officers; thus they diminish his social standing relative to other social actors advocating more aggressive strategies that more easily or "obviously" admit positive evaluation in these categories.

Yet moral grounds can also be invoked in defense of Fabius' strategy. I noted earlier that, standing above the assignment of value to particular performances within particular moral categories (e.g. determining where someone's performance in battle should be placed on the spectrum of "cowardly" to "valorous"), is the overarching criterion of "consequentiality for the community." Rather than worry about how his immediate performance is evaluated by contemporary judging audiences in terms of *virtus* and what sort of *gloria* he gains directly from it, Fabius is said to be looking always to the overarching criterion: does a performance benefit the commonwealth, or not? Whereas valor displayed by Roman soldiers in battle ordinarily benefits the commonwealth, Hannibal's recent success in pitched battles opens a gap between the ultimate good of the commonwealth and the particular approach – aggressive military confrontation – that is normally the means to this end. For if aggressively confronting Hannibal entails losses on a scale that put the very survival of the commonwealth at risk, then opportunities to display *virtus* must be sacrificed in the interest of commonwealth.

The concern for "safety" commonly ascribed to Fabius finds its moral justification in precisely this reckoning of the collective interest: "safety for the good of the commonwealth" can even be represented as his guiding principle. In Cicero's *De Senectute*, the principal speaker, Cato the Elder, says that as a youth he ardently admired the much older Fabius; he reports that Fabius, who was an augur, once declared that "whatever was done

²⁸ Cass. Dio fr. 57.8; Zonar. 8.25. Livy 22.8.7 attributes similar motives to the senate. Rambaud (1980, 120–1) suggests that Fabius' strategy embodies a "patrician" interest in protecting Rome and the legions, with no care for Italy, while Minucius, along with C. Terentius Varro (cos. 216), have a "plebeian" desire to defend Italy. But it is surely incorrect to see such divergent patrician and plebeian interests within the nobility of this era. More reasonable is Beck's (2000, 87) suggestion that Minucius' argument simply makes strategic sense: it is risky to abandon the allies and colonies to their fates; therefore a more interventionist, active strategy is needed.

After Cannae, when the Romans' capacity to aid allies was even further reduced, some did defect (Livy 22.61.10–12), and others who appealed to Rome for aid were told to take counsel for themselves, as no resources existed to assist (e.g. Livy 23.20.4–10). Yet even then we hear of efforts to lend aid: immediately after Cannae, a fleet is sent to Sicily at Hieron's request (Livy 22.56.6–8).

with the safety of the commonwealth in view was done under the best of auspices, and whatever was contrary to the good of the commonwealth was inauspicious.”²⁹ The “delaying” strategy itself is purportedly motivated by this concern for safety. The Ennian fragment asserts that delaying was the means by which Fabius set the commonwealth back up on its feet (*cunctando restituit rem*), and implies that this strategy emerged from his concern for “safety” (*salus*), notwithstanding the carping (*rumores*) of others. Valerius Maximus echoes and expands this terse Ennian sentiment.³¹ And in Silius’ representation, Minucius’ troops, once they are saved by Fabius’ troops following their rash assault on Hannibal, hail Fabius as their “salvation” and “father” (*salus, parens* – i.e. they owe their lives to him); Minucius himself acclaims Fabius as the “fatherland” and as the walls of the city.³² As everyone would agree that the city (i.e. the fatherland) needs a defensive wall for its safety, this metaphor compactly encapsulates the “safety for the good of the commonwealth” theme and ties it to Fabius (more on these ameliorative re-presentations of Fabius’ strategy below). One imagines that Fabius’ opponents could have found ways to invoke “the good of the commonwealth” in support of an aggressive strategy. But they never do so in the tradition as it survives to us: the moral arguments allowed to them are only those couched in terms of courage versus cowardice and honor versus dishonor; Fabius is given a monopoly on the larger *pro re publica* argument.

Finally, Fabius’ prioritizing of “safety for the good of the commonwealth” is also visible in the *ver sacrum* he vows upon assuming the dictatorship. As Livy describes the motion put to the people for approval, the condition for performing this sacrifice is “if the commonwealth survives the next five years in these wars.” It is entirely characteristic of Fabius to enlist the gods to the Roman cause through this vow, rather than through the more conventional, even banal, channel of vowing a temple before or in the heat of battle. The vow in battle is a wager on the *virtus* of the current soldiers and officers, a bet that they will display sufficient valor to secure victory in the immediate battle. No representation about the long-term welfare of the commonwealth is made, though victory now is no doubt assumed to

²⁹ Cic. *Sen.* 11: *dicere ausus est optumis auspiciis ea geri quae pro rei publicae salute gererentur; quae contra rem publicam ferrentur, contra auspicia ferri.*
Fr. 363–4 Sk., quoted above.

³¹ Val. Max. .8.2: *numquam a consilii salibritate ne parvi quidem certaminis discrimine recessit. . . ita hic non dimicando maxime civitati nostrae succurrisse visus est*, in contrast to Scipio Africanus, who helped by fighting.

³² Sil. 7.743: *hic patria est, murique urbis stant pectore in uno*; cf. 7.734–5.
Livy 22.10.2: *si res publica populi Romani Quiritium ad quinquennium proximum. . . salva servata erit hisce duellis.*

benefit the commonwealth in the longer term. The *ver sacrum*, by contrast, is a wager on the medium- to long-term survival of the commonwealth, and makes no representations about what commanders and soldiers must do in the short term. Hence there is no explicit privileging of performance in battle, and the door is opened to alternative approaches.

THE PARADOXES OF DELAY

The competing judgments about Fabius' strategy are encapsulated, in typically Roman style, in several paradoxical formulations that are spread widely through the tradition. These paradoxes relate to Fabius' nickname *Cunctator*, to claims about "winning without fighting," and to expressions about the sources of *gloria*. I survey these formulations in turn.

The application to Fabius of the verb *cunctor*, along with its associated nouns *cunctatio* and *cunctator*, allows these moral paradoxes to be formulated with particular point. This word's ethical versatility results from its apparent lack of a strong positive or negative connotation of its own, allowing it to be contextually reoriented so as to revalue Fabius at will.³⁴ In *De viris illustribus*, the label *cunctator* is said to have been bestowed by Fabius' critics (14.6: [sc. *Fabius*] *Cunctator ab obtrectatoribus dictus*), implying that it was "originally" intended as a reproach.³⁵ Indeed it is so used in various contexts. Livy's Minucius hurls this word against Fabius on two different occasions. While the army follows Hannibal toward Campania without intervening to prevent the devastation of the Italian countryside, Minucius laments the "delaying and indolence" (*cunctatio et socordia*) that has allowed an enemy from so far away to storm into the very heart of the Roman confederation; thanks to this delaying (*cunctatio*), it was for Hannibal that our ancestors saved Italy.³⁶ The ascription of this whole sorry state of affairs to the commander's (in)action, as well as the explicit glossing of *cunctatio* with the unambiguously negative term *socordia*, ethically blackens the word and makes it a term of reproach. Later, after being elevated to co-dictator, Minucius is made to say that he will follow his own counsel

³⁴ For what follows, see the helpful observations of Elliott 2009, 532–5. Elliott regards *cunctari* as "originally" pejorative (535), until redeemed by Ennius and/or its Fabian associations. This supposition is possible but unverifiable, as we have insufficient access to a pre-Fabian or even pre-Ennian stage of Latin (the two Plautine occurrences of *cunctor* are not illuminating). Hence I prefer to say that both pejorative and approbative connotations are always available, but must be constructed contextually.

³⁵ Similarly Zonar. 8.25: διδᾶκει ἐπαρᾶ ἐτῶν ἐπολιτῶν βαίτιαν εἶχεν, ὥς καὶ αἰετῆς ἐπονομασθῆναι εἶ

³⁶ Livy 22.14.5–6, 10: *Poenus advena, ab extremis orbis terrarum terminis nostra cunctatione et socordia iam huc progressus? tantum pro degeneravimus a patribus nostris. . . quam* [sc. *Italiam*] *vereor ne sic cunctantibus nobis Hannibali ac Poenis totiens servaverint maiores nostri.*

“if the dictator persists in that delay and sloth (*cunctatio ac segnitias*) that has been condemned by the judgment of both gods and men.”³⁷ Here again, it is the generally reproachful context, as well as the coupling of *cunctatio* with the pejorative “synonym” *segnitias*, that casts the word in a negative light and seeks to pin it to Fabius as a reproach.³⁸

Cunctatio may also, however, be rendered approbative through similar strategies of contextualization. Livy, in his authorial voice, says that Minucius “abused Fabius as being not a delayer (*cunctator*) but slothful (*segnis*), and not as cautious (*cautus*) but as fearful (*timidus*), imputing vices adjacent to his virtues.” Here Livy implies that the words *cunctator* and *cautus* – which he personally ascribes to Fabius – indicate virtues, but says that Minucius maliciously called Fabius *segnis* and *timidus*, which are the corresponding vices.³⁹ With this description Livy undercuts in advance the criticisms he later puts in Minucius’ mouth: for Minucius does, later, apply the word *cunctatio* to Fabius, glossing it with *socordia* and *segnitias* so as to render it a vice (as discussed above).⁴⁰ Minucius is thus shown to misunderstand this word’s true value and meaning – previously vouched for by Livy himself – when he deploys it to characterize his colleague. Livy also vindicates *cunctatio* as a virtue when he asserts that Fabius’ “clever delaying” (*sollers cunctatio*) gave Italy a brief respite from its disasters;⁴¹ the emphasis here on the benefits of the strategy, and the presence of the ethically positive modifier *sollers*, makes *cunctatio* approbative. This *cunctatio* also appears in Silius, who writes that Fabius “surpassed the splendid achievement of his ancestors [sc. the famous Fabii] by delaying . . . and matching Hannibal in generalship.”⁴² That *cunctatio* can bring such

³⁷ Livy 22.27.4: *si dictator in cunctatione ac segnitie deorum hominumque iudicio damnata perstaret.*

³⁸ Similar “reproachful” usages: Livy 27.21.2, where a tribune accuses the nobility of *cunctatio* and *fraus* in allowing Hannibal to linger in Italy; also Sil. 9.52–5, where Aemilius Paullus replies to Terentius Varro’s criticism that Fabius is *cunctator et aeger* (feeble): at least Fabius’ soldiers are now present to take up arms, in contrast to Flaminius; also Cass. Dio fr. 57.11, from a speech of Fabius: ἐγκλημαεῖ οὐν εἴχων . . . ὁτι ἐβραδύνω καὶ ἐὸ τι ἐμέλλω καὶ ἐὸ τι τῆς σῶσῶς τῆς ῥίσις ἑμῶν εἰσχωρῶ σέ δεῖ πρὸ οὐρῶμαι

In non-Fabian contexts too, *cunctatio* can be presented as a vice or failure of a general, soldier or statesman. One side’s *cunctatio* can bring disgrace or danger, or encourage and embolden the other side: Sall. *Hist.* fr. 1.77.17M (*Or. Philippici*); Livy 7.23.10; 8.15.5; 34.46.6; 35.35.17; 37.34.2; 42.57. ; Curt. 4.6.13; Frontin. *Str.* 2.8.4, 8. It may also cause one’s own side to miss an opportunity: Caes. *B Gal.* .23–4; Val. Max. .2.17. But cf. below, n. 45, for *cunctatio* as a general’s virtue.

³⁹ Livy 22.12.12: *pro cunctatore segnem pro cauto timidum, adfingens vicina virtutibus vitia, compellabat.* Similarly 22.39.20.

⁴⁰ Livy’s description of Minucius’ criticisms at 22.12.12 looks most directly ahead to 22.14.14, where Minucius says *audendo atque agendo res Romana crevit, non his segnibus consiliis quae timidi cauta vocant.* Here Minucius “misapplies” the terms *segnis*, *timidus* and *cautus* exactly as Livy has foretold.

⁴¹ Livy 22.23.1.

⁴² Sil. 6.638–40: *pulcherrima quorum / cunctando Fabius superavit facta ducemque / Hannibalem aequando.*

competitive advantage – with it he outstrips past heroes – marks it as a desirable quality. And while *De viris illustribus* asserts that Fabius received the nickname *Cunctator* from his detractors (as noted above), Florus implies quite the opposite: he says, “Fabius thought up a novel way to defeat Hannibal, namely by not fighting; hence his novel *cognomen*, beneficial to the commonwealth, *Cunctator*.”⁴³ Florus seems to imagine that this designation originated as an honorific *cognomen* (so he expressly calls it), one that adverts to Fabius’ military success as well as to the safety he conferred upon the commonwealth (*rei publicae salutare* – safety, again, being a leitmotif of Fabius).⁴⁴ Indeed, Florus’ phrase *rei publicae salutare Cunctator* may simply paraphrase Ennius’ *cunctando restituit rem*, with *restituit* interpreted as *servavit*, “saved” (which Florus then transforms into its adjectival form *salutare*, “beneficial” or “safety-bringing”). At any rate, both Florus and Ennius render *cunctatio* a positive quality by stressing its utility to the *res publica*.⁴⁵ We see, then, that *cunctatio* and its cognates can be enlisted on both sides of the debate about the ethics of Fabius’ strategy. Through glossing and contextualization, these words can be positioned as approbative or pejorative, as designating a virtue or a vice, depending on the author’s or speaker’s viewpoint and the rhetorical needs of the immediate context.⁴⁶

⁴³ Flor. 1.22: *Fabius . . . qui novam de Hannibale victoriam commentus est, non pugnare. hinc illi cognomen novum et rei publicae salutare Cunctator.*

⁴⁴ On *cunctator* as a descriptive appositive noun, a “nickname,” and/or a *cognomen*, see Rebuffat 1982, 165 n. 32, and Stanton 1971, 49–52. According to Stanton, the view that *cunctator* constituted a “formal” *cognomen* for Fabius emerges fairly late (not before Florus); previously it seems to have been regarded as merely descriptive.

⁴⁵ Seneca’s paraphrase of the Ennian line (or its then-conventional sentiment) likewise stresses Fabius’ utility to the collective: *quo alio Fabius adfectas imperii vires recreavit quam quod cunctari et trahere et morari scit. . . ?* (*De ira* 1.11.5). Here, not only the verb *cunctor*, but also *trahere* and *morari*, are vindicated as military virtues under the criterion of “good of the collective” (here called *imperium* rather than *res publica*). Examples of the approbative use can be multiplied: e.g. Livy 28.40.7 (some label Fabius’ *cunctatio* as *metus*, “fear,” and *pigritia*, “sluggishness” – until his approach is shown to be better); 22.15.1 (*cunctatio* misunderstood as a vice); Val. Max. 7. (ext.).8 (*saluberrimis cunctationibus*, “exceptionally wholesome delays”); Frontin. *Str.* 1. . (Fabius’ reputation as leading general connected with receiving the name *Cunctator*); Sil. 7.126 (*sollers cunctandi Fabius*, “Fabius, skilled at delaying”); Quint. *Inst.* 8.2.11; Ampel. 46.6.

In non-Fabian contexts, *cunctatio* can be presented more generally as a general’s virtue. Tactical delays may improve the chances for victory, even when the soldiers object: Livy 10.29.8; Frontin. *Str.* 1.11.1; Tac. *Hist.* .20; cf. Livy 44.38–9; Val. Max. 4.1.2. Yet delaying battle for tactical reasons is not the same thing as refraining from battle in principle: this “strong” Fabian sense of *cunctatio* seems to be unparalleled. Cf. above, n. 38, for *cunctatio* as a general’s vice.

⁴⁶ *Cunctatio* being a leitmotif for Fabius, two authors explore the paradoxical, even droll, idea that he is rash or hasty. Seneca (*Ben.* 4.27.2) discusses the orthodox Stoic position that all men who are not “wise” (that is, all men in the real world) are afflicted by every possible vice. An imagined critic of this position says, “What, Achilles is fearful? Aristides is unjust? And Fabius, who ‘restored the state by delaying,’ is rash?” (*et Fabius, qui cunctando restituit rem, temerarius est?*). Seneca then defends the orthodox position against this imagined critic by explaining that not all vices are equally prominent in all men. Silius too depicts a “hasty Fabius” following Cannae: *celer omnia*

A second set of paradoxical formulations asserts that Fabius “wins without fighting.” In these formulations the ethical stance is always approbative: it is accepted that Fabius did “win,” at least in the sense of successfully defending the commonwealth – but without aggressive warfare, hence without displaying the *virtus* that is normally the means to victory. The earliest surviving articulation of this paradox is in Cicero’s *De Senectute*. Here Cato the Elder says that Fabius “softened Hannibal by his patience/endurance/self-possession” (*Hannibalem . . . patientia sua mollebat*). Cato then quotes the Ennian fragment to authorize his assessment of Fabius’ achievement; Cato/Cicero seems to believe that the paradox is already latent there (perhaps in *cunctando restituit rem*).⁴⁷ Varro, early in his dialogue *Res Rusticae*, has one interlocutor, Agrius, cite what he calls an old proverb (*vetus proverbium*), namely, “The Roman conquers by sitting still” (*Romanus sedendo vincit*). The reference is presumably to Fabius, who alone could be considered proverbial in this way; also, the ablative gerund *sedendo* cannot help but recall the Ennian formulation.⁴⁸ Indeed, a handful of additional passages deploy *sedendo* apparently as a synonym – perhaps simply as variation – for *cunctando*. In Livy, as Fabius urges the next year’s consul Aemilius Paullus to carry on with the delaying strategy, he asks, “Do you doubt that we will overcome him [sc. Hannibal] by sitting still, since he grows weaker by the day?”⁴⁹ And in Silius, Hannibal laments that “while he restrains himself and we are worn away by inactivity, a type of winning has been contrived.”⁵⁰ The “novelty” that Silius’ Hannibal perceives in Fabius’ strategy is brought out elsewhere as well. Florus, as noted above, says that Fabius owes his nickname *cunctator* to devising a “novel” way of defeating Hannibal, by not fighting.⁵¹ Again, examples of

lustrans / clamitat attonitis Fabius: ‘Non ulla relicta est, / credite, cunctandi ratio. adproperemus (10.593–5). Thus he forswears his leitmotif.

⁴⁷ Cic. *Sen.* 10. Cicero/Cato also imposes a distinction in age, with Hannibal youthful (*Hannibalem iuveniliter exultantem*) and Fabius aged, though fighting like a younger man (*hic et bella gerebat ut adulescens, cum plane grandis esset*). The age theme is appropriate to the treatise *De senectute*, of course, but is not present at all in the Ennian fragment adduced to support the claim. For this virtuous form of *patientia*, whose paradoxical effect is to “soften” the enemy, see Kaster (2002, 136–8), under “proposition two” in his taxonomy.

⁴⁸ Varro, *Rust.* 1.2.2. Further discussion of this Varronian passage below.

⁴⁹ Livy 22.39.15: *dubitas ergo quin sedendo superaturi simus eum qui senescat in dies . . . ?*

⁵⁰ Sil. 7.151–2: *inventum, dum se cohibet terimurque sedendo, / vincendi genus*. It is unclear whether *sedendo* refers to Fabius’ strategy, or to the inactivity reciprocally imposed upon Hannibal – perhaps both understandings are available. Elsewhere, *sedendo* clearly applies to Fabius: see the passages of Varro and Livy just quoted, along with Sil. 8.12–15 on the success of Fabius’ “science of inactivity” (*ars sedendi*), and 16.673–4, where Scipio gives Fabius credit: *peperitque sedendo / omnia Cunctator*.

⁵¹ Flor. 1.22: *Fabius . . . qui novam de Hannibale victoriam commentus est, non pugnare*.

formulations that ring changes on the “winning without fighting” paradox – often, though not always, with an ablative gerund – can be multiplied.⁵²

One particular formulation of this paradox warrants special mention: the phrase “broke by delay” (*mora fregit*), along with minor variations, which conveys the entire paradox with extreme brevity. For the violent, destructive activity often connoted by *frangere* (“break, smash”) sits incongruously with the hesitant passivity of *mora* (“delay, hesitation”); the paradox is that the latter is the means to the former. The relatively wide distribution of this phrase and its variants in the tradition may cause one to suspect that it – like the other widely distributed Fabian keywords *cunctor* (etc.), *res (publica)*, *salus* and *gloria* – derives from an expression in Ennius.⁵³ Indeed, Propertius declares that among the themes Ennius sang were the “victorious delays (*morae*) of Fabius.”⁵⁴ This is the earliest surviving “Fabian” occurrence of the word *mora*, and the passage may echo Ennian words as it describes Ennian themes. A generation later Manilius, enumerating the heroes whose souls reside in the Milky Way, includes “Fabius unconquered thanks to (?) his delaying,”⁵⁵ and much later the author of *De viris illustribus* says that our hero’s nickname derived from his having “broken Hannibal by delay.”⁵⁶ Florus expands the formula so as to make the paradox even more patent: he writes, “Fabius . . . wore Hannibal out to such a degree that he who could not be broken by valor (*frangi virtute*) was pulverized by delay (*mora comminueretur*).”⁵⁷ Thus Florus asserts not only that *mora* was the way to victory, but that *virtus* was not and could not be. This point is always

⁵² E.g. Forum Augustum *elogium* (as below, n. 95): *Hannibalem . . . subsequendo coercuit*; Plin. *HN* 22.10: [sc. *Fabius*] *qui rem omnem Romanam restituit non pugnando*, a slight expansion and rewording of the Ennian phrase; Val. Max. 7. 7: *Fabius . . . cui non dimicare vincere fuit*; Sil. 7.15: *lento Poenum moderamine lusit*; 7.91–2: *Fabius . . . procedens . . . arte bellandi / lento similis*; 7.124–5: *domat exultantia corda / infractasque minas dilato Marte fatigat*. Some formulations of the paradox merely credit Fabius with not being defeated, or with preventing Hannibal from winning. All such instances relate to Scipio, as if making room for Scipio to do something further. At Livy 28.40.14 Fabius, addressing the senate regarding Scipio’s plan to invade Africa, says, *vincere ego prohibui Hannibalem ut a vobis quorum vigent nunc vires etiam vinci posset*; similarly Sil. 16.672–6; Polyaeus 8.14.2; cf. Val. Max. .8.2. For the ablative gerund in Ennius, in the Fabian tradition and elsewhere in Latin historiography, see Elliott 2009.

⁵³ Rebuffat (1982, 162 and n. 21) notes the frequent occurrence of *mora* in the tradition, and hints that it may have stood in Ennius; I would go further and suggest that Ennius somewhere used *mora* in conjunction with *fregit* (or some form of *frangere*) referring to Fabius. *Frango* is a good Ennian word (*Ann.* fr. 177, 395 Sk.), though *moral/moror* is unattested (unless it lurks in the corruptions at *Op. Inc.* fr. 2 Sk. and *Trag.* v. 391 Jocelyn).

⁵⁴ Prop. . . 9: *victicisque moras Fabii*. ⁵⁵ Manilius 1.790: *invictusque mora Fabius*.

⁵⁶ *De vir. ill.* 14.6: *Fabium . . . qui Hannibalem mora fregit, cunctator ab obtrectatoribus dictus*.

⁵⁷ Flor. 1.22: *itaque [sc. Fabius] . . . sic maceravit Hannibalem ut, qui frangi virtute non poterat, mora comminueretur*.

subsumed, but seldom expressly stated, in the paradox of Fabius “winning without fighting.”⁵⁸

The third set of paradoxes in which the competing judgments about Fabius’ strategy are crystallized involve claims about *gloria*: which grounds for positive renown are valid and which are invalid; on what basis praise of one’s actions should circulate in society; whether social value is distributed correctly. The issue here, as will already be clear, is that the *gloria* in question normally derives from displaying *virtus* in battle, which would also normally benefit the commonwealth. But Fabius holds that, under current circumstances, joining battle puts the commonwealth at mortal risk. Given this novel separation of end from means, to which should *gloria* attach? The Fabian position, of course, is that it should always attach to the end, namely the good of the commonwealth. Those who derive *gloria* only from *virtus* displayed in battle have confused the end with the means – an extremely dangerous confusion under current circumstances, when joining battle harms rather than benefits the commonwealth.

Earlier we examined the objection that Fabius’ strategy is cowardly. The circulation of such criticism constitutes the bad reputation, the inverse of *gloria*, that Fabius incurs for not leading his soldiers into battle. Additional texts, however, reflect on the sources of Fabius’ *gloria*, and respond to precisely the accusation of cowardice. Livy says that, when Minucius is elevated to co-dictator to reward his daring, Fabius informs the senate that “having preserved the army is more glorious than having killed many thousands of enemies.”⁵⁹ Thus Fabius explicitly rejects the basis upon which Minucius’ current *gloria* – the grounds for his promotion – depends. For Livy has already reported that Minucius’ victorious skirmish with Hannibal cost 5, Roman soldiers against 6, enemy, a negligible difference.⁶⁰ Instead, Fabius says, the safety of Roman soldiers (*servasse exercitum*, and by extension, the *res publica* too) is the proper footing for *gloria*; the number of enemy dead, a proxy for the *virtus* of one’s own soldiers, is the wrong basis at least for now. A fragment of a similar speech is found in Dio. Here Fabius remarks that he is reproached for his delaying and concern

⁵⁸ Other occurrences of *mora fregit* or the like: Ampel. 18.6; 46.6; Amm. Marc. 29.5.32– (on which see below). At App. *Han.* 13.53 the phrase ἐκτρύχειν ἄννιβον ἐτὶ χρόνον looks like a direct translation of *frangere mora*. But note that ἐκτρύχειν picks out from within *frangere*’s semantic range a specifically grinding, wearing activity (e.g. *OLD* s.v., senses 3, 7), while Florus’ gloss *comminuere* (see above, n. 57) picks out the violent shattering or breaking activity (e.g. *OLD* s.v., senses 1, 2).

⁵⁹ Livy 22.25.15: *servasse exercitum quam multa milia hostium occidisse maiorem gloriam esse.*

⁶⁰ Livy 22.24.14.

for safety, rather than for (as he implies *should* be the basis for reproach) rushing into battle and losing many soldiers, provided he can kill many enemies, in the quest to be acclaimed *imperator* and win a triumph.⁶¹ Thus, he suggests, the traditional route to glory, and the monuments associated with such glory, ought rather to be a ground for criticism, while his own approach ought to accrue praise rather than blame. Later in the same fragment Dio inflects this thought somewhat differently: “Fabius wanted the commonwealth to be safe and victorious, but not that he himself be of good renown.”⁶² The point is not that Fabius despises a good reputation in principle, but that he rejects glory bestowed on the “wrong” basis – any that he deems incompatible with the safety of the commonwealth. In Plutarch, when Fabius is criticized by Minucius and the soldiers, he says that fear on behalf of the fatherland is never shameful, and that one who holds high office should never be perplexed by his reputation among men, or by their slanders and blame.⁶³ Thus he concedes feeling fear, as his critics allege – but since it is felt exclusively for the commonwealth, it brings no shame. Later, after Minucius is elevated to co-dictator, Fabius remarks that his colleague may fall into disaster, being “mad with empty renown and prestige.”⁶⁴ It is “empty,” presumably, because it derives from Minucius’ (and others’) mistaken valuing of valor displayed in combat above the good of the commonwealth. Again, examples of such paradoxical formulations can be multiplied.⁶⁵ Their point, however, is always the same: to indicate that a gap has opened between two bases for *gloria* that are normally coherent – indeed, under normal circumstances they may not even be

⁶¹ Cass. Dio fr. 57.11: ἔγκλημα ἐγὼ οὐκ ἔχω ἐπὶ χ... ὅτι διὰ τὸ ἀκένδυνον ἄσφατον στρατηγῶν, ἵνα ἀπολλοῦσιν ἐμὲν ἐπὶ τῶν στρατιωτῶν ἐπιβολῶν ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀλλοῦς δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἐπιπολεμίων ἐπιποκτείνασιν ἐπὶ τὸ κράτος ἐξ ἄβουλας καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἐπινοουμένων.

⁶² Cass. Dio fr. 57.16: τὸ ἐγὼ ἀρεκὸν ὄνομα ὡς ζήτησθαί καὶ ἄκρατεῖν, ἐπὶ ἀλλοῦ κέουτο τὸς ἐξ ἡμῶν εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν. Cf. fr. 57.21.

⁶³ Plut. *Fab.* 5.7–8. ⁶⁴ Plut. *Fab.* 10.4: ἐκμανεῖς ἐπὶ τὸ ἀκένησθαι ἐξ ἡδονῆς καὶ ἰδῶν.

⁶⁵ Cicero (*Off.* 1.84; see below) contrasts Fabius with the figures of Callicratidas and Cleombrotus, Spartan generals who put their fatherland at risk by pursuing military glory for themselves. These figures stand as Greek versions of Minucius, or – in Fabius’ later representation – Scipio, who Fabius claims is doing the same thing (Livy 28.41.1). Cf. Livy 24.9.11; 27.40.8; 44.22.10 for other inflections of this paradox. It is formulated very compactly at Livy 22. .8 and Val. Max. .8.2, where the *speciosa* (“good to look at,” i.e. superficially praiseworthy) are contrasted with the *salutaria* (beneficial or “safety-bringing”); similarly Livy 28.40.7 (*speciosiora* ~ *meliora*).

Silius, uniquely, makes more limited ethical claims for Fabius. At 7.396–8, Fabius concedes to Minucius that laying the enemy low is glorious, but says that he himself will seek a “triumph” from a different source, namely preserving the army. Here he does not assert that the conventional bases for allocating *gloria* are wrong in general, or even in this case, but merely that he himself is doing something different. Similarly 16.672–6, where *gloria* is said to come either from Fabian not-being-defeated or from Scipionic aggressive confrontation.

recognized as two distinct bases – but for the moment are in conflict: the question whether a performance is courageous or cowardly (the *virtus* criterion, requiring battle), and the question whether the performance benefits the commonwealth (the *pro re publica* criterion).

POST, MAGIS, NUNC: FABIUS REVALUED AND EXEMPLIFIED

The most detailed exposition of the alternative forms of glory is found in the speech Livy gives to Fabius, where Fabius encourages Aemilius Paullus (cos. 216) to follow his example and adopt the strategy he pioneered as dictator the previous year: “The matter stands thus: the only method of waging war against Hannibal is the one I employed.”⁶⁶ For just as Fabius had to contend with Hannibal as well as his *magister equitum*/co-dictator Minucius, Fabius notes that Aemilius will face opposition from his consular colleague M. Terentius Varro no less than from Hannibal. “But you will withstand them,” says Fabius, “if you stand firmly enough against [sc. bad] reputation and people’s criticisms, and if neither your colleague’s empty glory nor your own false ill-repute troubles you.”⁶⁷ This, of course, is exactly Fabius’ own approach, despising as false the *infamia* that was heaped upon him and deeming his colleague’s *gloria* to be “empty” (*vana*) – both reputations, in his view, standing on illegitimate grounds. Most striking, however, is the sententious conclusion, two sentences later, that “he who spurns <empty> glory will have the real thing.”⁶⁸ This assertion confidently predicts that the current linking of *gloria* with displays of *virtus* in battle will eventually be recognized as incorrect and hence be abandoned, while the Fabian pursuit of safety for the good of the commonwealth will ultimately be judged the “correct” basis for *gloria*. This shift, indeed, is essential if Fabius is to become a positive *exemplum*: his strategy, and its associated values, must come to be accepted as correct and valid. The difficulty is that performance in battle can be observed and evaluated immediately; this kind of *gloria* is quickly, decisively and visibly won or lost. But the *gloria* associated with enabling the state to survive can only be assessed in a longer time frame. In waiting out the necessary lapse of time, it is almost inevitable that one who takes this approach will incur infamy of the “false” sort, precisely because he refuses to join battle.

⁶⁶ Livy 22.39.9: *ita res se habet: una ratio belli gerendi adversus Hannibalem est qua ego gessi.*

⁶⁷ Livy 22.39.18: *resistes autem, adversus famam rumoresque hominum si satis firmus steteris, si te neque collegae vana gloria neque tua falsa infamia moverit.*

⁶⁸ Livy 22.39.20: <*vanam*> *gloriam qui spreverit veram habebit.* Muretus’ supplement <*vanam*> creates a neat parallel with *veram*, but it is not necessary to the sense – the meaning must be the same with or without the adjective – and most editors reject it.

The tradition insists, however, that Fabius won this ethical and ideological battle – that his contemporaries and successors did finally revalue his actions and dispositions as morally positive, and those of his detractors as negative, at least under the conditions that then held. The idea that *gloria* (of the “true” variety) later came to him is already present in the Ennian fragment. Here the speaker says that Fabius made *salus* his top priority, and that therefore (*ergo*), in the speaker’s own day (*nunc*), which is after Fabius’ day (*post*), Fabius’ *gloria* “shines out the more” (*magis . . . claret*).⁶⁹ Other texts indicate even more explicitly that such a revaluation occurred. When Polybius introduces Fabius and his strategy for the first time, he immediately remarks that the initial unpopularity of this approach later turned to admiration.⁷⁰ Polybius indicates more precisely the circumstances of this revaluation in narrating how Fabius saved Minucius and his soldiers from Hannibal’s trap. He says that observers of the battle saw that Minucius had been rash and reckless, while disaster was only avoided thanks to Fabius’ caution, foresight and so on – thus Minucius’ characteristics are revalued (by these observers) as vices, and Fabius’ as virtues.⁷¹ However, the *dénouement* of Fabius’ conflict with Minucius is not the only such moment. For, as noted above, this conflict is replayed the following year in the conflict between the consuls Aemilius Paullus and Terentius Varro. Its catastrophic outcome – the defeat at Cannae – spurs yet another affirmation of Fabius’ approach as virtuous rather than vicious. Plutarch relates that what had previously been regarded as cowardice and sluggishness in Fabius was deemed after Cannae to be a sort of divine intelligence, and no mere human calculation, that could foresee this future disaster.⁷² Therefore, he says, the Romans now placed themselves entirely in his hands.

The broadened moral perspective among Romans that results from the revaluation of Fabius enables them to assess potential commanders more acutely. Henceforth, a general who was notably eager for battle

⁶⁹ Enn. *Ann.* fr. 364–5 Sk. ⁷⁰ Polyb. .89. .

⁷¹ Polyb. .105.8: τοῖς ἐμὲν εὐνὲ παρ᾽ αὐτὸν ἐγενομένοις ἐτὸν ἐκίνδυνον ἔην ἐναργεῆς ἔδτι ἐδιὰ ἐμὲν ἐτὴν ἐ Μάρκου ἐτὸ λωμανὲ ἀπό λωλετὰ ἐδὸλα, ἐδιὰ ἐδὲ ἐτὴν ἐεὐλάβειαν ἐτοῦ ἐΦαβίου ἐσεσωσται ἐκαί ἐπρὸ τοῦ ἐκαί ἐν ἑν. τοῖς δ' ἐν τῇ Ῥώμῃ τότ' ἐγενετο ἐφανερὸν ἐδόμολογουμένως ἐτὶ ἐδιαφέρει ἐστρατιωτικῆς ἐπροπτείας καί ἐκενοδοσίας ἐστρατηγικῆς ἐπρόνοιας καί ἐθλογοισμὸς ἐστῶς καί ἐνουνεχῆς. For similar sentiments, Livy 22.29.8–9; 22. .7; Polyaeus 8.14.1; Plut. *Fab.* 13.2. At Livy 28.40.7, Fabius says that others’ plans have often seemed more attractive at first sight (*speciosiora primo aspectu*), but his are shown by experience to be better (*usu meliora*). The change in valuation over time is implied in the contrast between first-sight attractiveness and the lessons of experience.

⁷² Plut. *Fab.* 17.5: ἡ γὰρ ἔπρὸ τῆς μάχης ἐΦαβίου ἐδειλιάει καί ἐψυχρότης ἐλεγόμενῆ μετὰ τὴν ἐμάχην ἐνεύθυσέου δὲ ἀνθρώπινος ἐδόκει ἐλογισμὸς ἐλλάβεθῆ ἐϊν ἐτι ἐχρημαδία ἐνοίας καί ἐδαιμόνιον, ἐκε τοσοῦτου ἐτὰ ἐμὲλλοντα ἐπρροωμένης.

could either be admired for his valorous actions or disposition, or be suspected of harboring the vice of recklessness. Livy says that during the elections for 207 the senate and people selected consuls whose *virtus* they deemed “safe” (*tuta*) from Carthaginian trickery. For both consuls of 208 had fallen into traps and died in their “overeagerness to join battle” (*nimia cupiditate conserendi*). Indeed, the people now held that overhasty, hot dispositions in commanders had been “destructive” throughout the war – destructive, presumably, to the armies and the *res publica* above all.⁷³ Fabius is not mentioned here, but his influence is felt in this depiction of the *populus Romanus* deliberating under a moral perspective that has now been broadened to include the values he championed. There is no suggestion that the people reject “performance in battle” altogether as a basis for conferring value: rather, they (at last) simply recognize that “the good of the commonwealth” is a distinct and legitimate moral basis, notwithstanding its lesser immediacy and tangibility. Furthermore, they recognize that judgments passed on these two bases often coincide, but may also diverge. In this case, the consul M. Claudius Marcellus’ undoubted martial courage (he displayed *virtus*) resulted in his death, leaving his army perilously exposed and leaderless (bad for the commonwealth). In such cases, the people now recognize, the “good of the commonwealth” criterion must take precedence. The Romans’ newfound capacity to make such distinctions and judgments is the fruit of their revaluation of Fabius.

Sometimes this revaluation is expressed in specifically military terms. In Silius, Minucius changes his tune after being saved by Fabius: he declares, “here is our fatherland: the city’s walls stand in this one breast.”⁷⁴ The metaphor of Fabius being, or containing, city walls confers a specifically military validity upon his strategy, since everyone would agree that a city needs a protective wall. Thus the key Fabian aim of “safety,” previously damned as cowardly, is repackaged in militarily legitimating terms that reverse its ethical valence. Another legitimating military metaphor links Fabius with Claudius Marcellus: Fabius is sometimes called the “shield” of the Romans while Marcellus is the “sword.”⁷⁵ This metaphor again picks out the defensive, protective aspect of Fabius’ approach to warfare, but without devaluing it relative to Marcellus’ more aggressive approach. For

⁷³ Livy 27. .9–10: *cum toto eo bello dammosa praepropera ac fervida ingenia imperatorum fuissent.*

⁷⁴ Sil. 7.743: *hic patria est, murique urbis stant pectore in uno.*

⁷⁵ Plut. *Fab.* 19.4; *Marc.* 9.7 (citing Posidonius as his source for this metaphor); Flor. 1.22. Cic. *Rep.* 5.10 fr. 1, which reads (in its entirety) *Marcellus ut acer et pugnax, Maximus ut consideratus et lentus*, belongs to the same ideological stratum of presenting the two approaches as contrasting yet complementary, as opposite but equally necessary and valid manifestations of military virtue.

just as a soldier requires both shield and sword as basic, essential equipment, this metaphor suggests that the two approaches are complementary, compatible, equally legitimate and indeed essential to Rome's military success. Finally Pliny the Elder, in a discussion of herbs, remarks on the "grass crown," also called "siege crown," that soldiers bestowed upon a commander who had liberated them from a siege. Among the recipients Pliny enumerates, Fabius is deemed especially outstanding because the crown was awarded – Pliny expressly declares – not by Minucius' army after he saved it, but by all of Italy, after Hannibal was driven from the peninsula. Thus the general who refused to fight is granted the highest military honor.⁷⁶

The tradition reports other miscellaneous honors, which collectively indicate the high value later accorded to Fabius and his strategy – the *gloria* he won, paradoxically, for spurning *gloria*; the fruit of his revaluation from coward to hero. For instance, when Livy weighs the odd constitutional circumstances of Fabius' appointment as dictator (see above, n. 10), he concludes that Fabius was actually appointed "acting dictator" (*pro dictatore*) but was wrongly remembered as being a full-fledged dictator due to "his magnificent achievements and outstanding glory as general." That the wrong office was ascribed to him, Livy suggests, reflects the honor, however inadvertent, paid to him by people who assume that the loftiest achievements require the loftiest position. The mistake itself thus indicates the high value later ascribed to Fabius and his deeds.⁷⁷ In a different vein, Plutarch reports that Fabius' son was elected consul for 213 BC, as an honor to his father – as if he could not have been elected in his own right.⁷⁸ In the census of 209, Livy reports, Fabius was selected as the leading member of the senate (*princeps senatus*) over a rival with greater seniority as censor, the traditional criterion for granting this highly honorific title. The current censor Sempronius argued for Fabius, against the objections of his traditionally minded colleague Cornelius, by asserting that Fabius "would win out as the leading man in the state, even in Hannibal's judgment." The

⁷⁶ Plin. *HN* 22.10. Gellius, who briefly discusses this crown at 5.6.8–10, specifically names only Fabius as a recipient, as if his achievement towered above every other. See also Maxfield 1981, 67–9, 118–19.

Several passages simply assert that Fabius was an outstanding general: Cic. *Off.* 1.84, mentioning Hannibal and Fabius as *callidi duces*; similarly Nep. *Han.* 5.2. The Forum Augustum *elogium* (as below, n. 95) declares him *dux aetatis suae cautissimus et rei militaris peritissimus*; Quint. *Inst.* 8.2.11 refers to his *plures imperatorias virtutes*; Frontin. *Str.* 1. . . speaks of his *nomen . . . summi ducis*; cf. Frontin. 1.8.2; Plut. *Fab.* 23.2.

⁷⁷ Livy 22.31.11: *res inde gestas gloriamque insignem ducis . . . ut qui pro dictatore <creatus erat, dictator> crederetur facile obtinuisse*. Livy may be wrong, and Fabius was quite possibly appointed simply as dictator (see above, n. 10). But the logic of Livy's argument is what matters here, not the correctness of his conclusion.

⁷⁸ Plut. *Fab.* 24.1.

implication is that Fabius' achievements in the current war have won him prestige that overshadows senators senior to him.⁷⁹ And Valerius Maximus says that the entire *populus* contributed money for Fabius' funeral, to make it as grand and showy as possible. Valerius relates this story under the rubric "On those who display gratitude" (*de gratis*), for he asserts that the Roman people were thanking Fabius "for his five consulships discharged with such concern for the safety of the commonwealth."⁸⁰ Plutarch also mentions these funerary contributions, saying that Fabius was regarded as "father of the people." This characterization also implies gratitude, since parents – those who give the gift of life – are quintessentially the persons to whom gratitude is owed.⁸¹

Turning at last to exemplarity proper, we find various texts in which Fabius' "delaying" performance and its associated values are invoked as normative – that is, as a model for subsequent social actors to imitate or avoid, or as a moral standard by which subsequent actors' performances can be evaluated. Earlier we saw how, in Livy, Fabius presents himself to Aemilius Paullus as a model of how to wage war against Hannibal. When Aemilius falls at Cannae, he avers that he lived and now dies mindful of Fabius' precepts.⁸² Even before this, however, the consuls who succeeded Fabius late in 217, after his dictatorship expired, continued to wage war according to his precepts.⁸³ And even during Fabius' dictatorship, according to Livy, Hannibal himself was at times reduced to employing the "Fabian arts" of delay and inaction.⁸⁴ Thus the Fabian strategy is depicted as an effectual model that others follow in waging this war. More interesting, perhaps, are later instances where the example of Fabius is adduced to justify or condemn some course of action. Describing the events leading up to the battle of Pydna in 168, Livy portrays Aemilius Paullus, the consul and eventual victor, as operating in a Fabian mold. Rebuffat notes how Aemilius explicitly

⁷⁹ Livy 27.11.11: *Q. Fabium Maximum quem tum principem Romanae civitatis esse vel Hannibale iudice victurus esset*. Five years later he was renewed in this status, according to the Forum Augustum *elogium* (as below, n. 95: *princeps in senatum duobus lustris lectus est*).

⁸⁰ Val. Max. 5.2. : *quinque consulatibus salutariter rei publicae administratis*.

⁸¹ Plut. *Fab.* 27.4: ὥς ἐπιτοτέρω αἰετοῦ ἐξέδημιου. On gratitude owed to parents, see Roller 2001, 188–9, 249–50.

⁸² Livy 22.49.10; also Plut. *Fab.* 14.7; 16.8–9.

⁸³ Livy 22. .1– ; Cass. Dio fr. 57.21. Fabius' six-month term will have expired in late December, but in this era new consuls entered office on March 15. In the interval, the elected consul Cn. Servilius Geminus resumed command, along with the suffect M. Atilius Regulus.

⁸⁴ Livy 22.24.9–10: *Hannibal . . . artibus Fabi, sedendo et cunctando, bellum gerebat*. Conversely, when Fabius takes Tarentum by treachery in 209, Hannibal declares that the Romans have found their own Hannibal, for they retook the city by the same deceitful means they had lost it (Livy 27.16.10; Plut. *Fab.* 23.1). Thus the two great generals follow one another's example.

invokes Fabius when speaking to the people, and demonstrates additional thematic and verbal echoes that leave the impression that Aemilius instantiates Fabian wisdom and cunning.⁸⁵ Indeed, Rebuffat suggests that Livy's depiction of Aemilius as a new Fabius derives ultimately from Ennius' *Annales*: in his view, the famous fragment comes from a speech Ennius puts in Aemilius Paullus' mouth before Pydna, a speech in which Aemilius justifies his own cautious strategy. Such a context would perfectly suit the fragment's retrospective, admiring invocation of the Fabian model.⁸⁶

In Varro's dialogue *Res Rusticae*, the interlocutor Agrius invokes Fabius with tongue firmly planted in cheek. On the occasion of the Sowing Festival (*Feriae Sementivae*), Agrius, Varro and several others have gathered in the temple of Tellus (Earth) for a feast, at the temple-keeper's invitation. The keeper himself, their host, has not arrived yet, so Agrius suggests that the company put into practice the old proverb, "the Roman conquers by sitting," and sit on a bench to await his arrival.⁸⁷ This comparison of great things with small – suggesting that the guests should imitate Fabius not in order to save the state by delaying, but to obtain their dinner by *literally* sitting and waiting – is clearly humorous. Yet the leisure time so created, in the temple of Tellus during an agricultural festival, provides a highly suitable occasion for the dialogue on agriculture that follows.⁸⁸

Cicero, too, employs Fabius as a model of comportment and standard of evaluation. Reporting to Atticus in 59 BC on the political situation in Rome, Cicero writes, "Bibulus is in heaven [i.e. in high esteem or honor] – I don't know why, but he's praised as though he were the 'one man' who, 'by delaying, restored the commonwealth for us.'"⁸⁹ Consul along with C. Iulius Caesar that year, M. Calpurnius Bibulus (in)famously stayed at home and watched the heavens for ominous signs, seeking to obstruct his colleague's agrarian law and other initiatives. For this, Cicero says, he was praised to the skies, though Cicero himself doubts the praise is deserved. Whether the Ennian verse represents the actual terms of that praise

⁸⁵ Rebuffat 1982, 157–8; Livy 44.22.10.

⁸⁶ This argument entails that Ennius' poem included (or ended with?) the battle of Pydna, which in turn entails that the poet lived at least until mid-168 – controversial views. See Rebuffat 1982, 158–61 on this matter, and 163–4 on Fabius as an *exemplum* for the Aemilii.

⁸⁷ Varro, *Rust.* 1.2.1–2: *voltis igitur interea vetus proverbium, quod est "Romanus sedendo vincit," usurpemus dum ille venit? . . . ad subsellia sequentibus nobis procedit.*

⁸⁸ In the end, however, the Fabian model fails them; they do not "win by sitting." For book one, and the dialogue it contains, ends (1.69.2–) with the arrival of a weeping freedman who announces, shockingly, that the temple-keeper has just been stabbed to death by an unknown assailant. The guests/interlocutors thus depart without receiving dinner or meeting their host.

⁸⁹ Cic. *Att.* 2.19.2: *Bibulus in caelo est, nec qua re scio, sed ita laudatur quasi <qui> "unus homo nobis cunctando restituit rem."*

(“people are seriously comparing him to Fabius!”), or rather represents Cicero’s own ironic commentary on the whole situation (“as if, by such nonsense, he were saving the commonwealth à la Fabius”), is unclear. In either case, however, the Fabian model of delaying in the service of the commonwealth, as articulated by Ennius, is being deployed, seriously or ironically, as a canon of comparison and evaluation for Bibulus, whose truculence also purports to be in the service of the commonwealth.⁹⁰ Fifteen years later, in *De Officiis*, Cicero invokes the Fabian *exemplum* in a more general context. He says that the Spartan generals Callicratidas and Cleombrotus sacrificed the good of the state in pursuit of personal military glory. But Fabius did much better, as Ennius shows – and here Cicero quotes the three Ennian verses.⁹¹ Thus he adduces Fabius as the (morally positive) counterexample to the two Spartans – a general who is praiseworthy because he willingly incurred ill-repute in his unwavering pursuit of the collective good. Then Cicero extends the Fabian example from the military arena to the civic one: he writes, “This type of error [i.e. worrying more about one’s own reputation than about the common good] must be avoided in civic affairs too. For there are people who don’t dare say what they think, however excellent it is, for fear of incurring ill-will.” That is, the Fabian predicament – the reckoning of personal reputation against the common good, when the two do not coincide – may confront orators or magistrates who speak in the forum or senate or courts, no less than generals who fight in the field.⁹²

In the next generation, the emperor Augustus likewise exploited the exemplarity of Fabius. According to Appian, Augustus often recalled the Fabian precept that one should join battle with a military genius only under dire necessity. For Augustus was not reckless, and preferred craft to daring in battle – like Fabius.⁹³ Augustus also cast his adopted son Tiberius in a Fabian mold, as a letter quoted by Suetonius indicates. Hearing of Tiberius’ care in arranging a summer camp for his army, under difficult circumstances and while being in disfavor with his own soldiers, Augustus praises his prudence and declares that the famous verse could, by general consensus, be

⁹⁰ On Bibulus’ obstruction of Caesar in 59, see still Münzer 1897; relevant texts listed in Broughton 1951–86, II, 187–8.

⁹¹ Cic. *Off.* 1.84: *quanto Q. Maximus melius! de quo Ennius: “unus homo . . .”* (etc.).

⁹² Cic. *Off.* 1.84: *quod genus peccandi vitandum est etiam in rebus urbanis. sunt enim qui quod sentiunt, etsi optimum sit, tamen invidiae metu non audent dicere.* Yet Cicero apparently regarded Bibulus’ obstructionism in 59 BC as a misapplication of the Fabian model to the civic sphere.

⁹³ App. *Han.* 13.56: οὐδέῃ[sc. πρόσεδραετέχνιτηνἐμάχησῆενἀκαίρονἐῖναιἐτὴνἐνάγκην] καὶ ἐδὲ Σεβαστὸς ἐὺστερον ἐπολλάκις ἐμῆμνητο, ἐοὐκ ἐὼν ἐὺχερὴς οὐδ’ οὕτως ἐξ ἐμάχασε μᾶλλον ἐτόλμη ἢ ἐτέχνη χρῆσθαι ἐ Augustus’ praise of Fabius as “the most cautious commander” (*dux cautissimus*) in the Forum Augustum *elogium* (as below, n. 95) is proof that he deployed Fabius as an *exemplum* of military caution, establishing Fabius as an imitable model for himself and others.

applied to him: “one person, by being watchful, restored the commonwealth for us.”⁹⁴ The twist is that Augustus has substituted “watchfulness” (expressed in the telltale ablative gerund) for “delay” as Tiberius’ means of preserving the commonwealth. Finally, Augustus included Fabius in the gallery of “outstanding men” (*principes* or *summi viri*) who were honored with statues and short inscriptions (*elogia*) in the Forum Augustum. While only a fragment of Fabius’ *elogium* from the Forum Augustum survives, its complete text is preserved in a copy found in Arretium.⁹⁵ Scholars generally agree that Augustus was presenting these “outstanding men” to other aristocrats as models for emulation and standards for evaluation, while implicitly claiming to have surpassed their achievements himself. In particular, Fabius’ *elogium* says that he was chosen *princeps senatus* for two five-year terms (quoted above, n. 79; Fabius died before the second term ended). Meanwhile Augustus reports, in *Res Gestae* 7, that he himself was *princeps senatus* for forty years. Even as he honors Fabius’ achievement in the *elogium*, then, Augustus permits attentive viewers to recognize how far he himself surpassed Fabius’ standard.⁹⁶

Three hundred and fifty years later, Fabius is adduced in Ammianus’ history as an *exemplum* for the Roman general Theodosius. On campaign against some Mauretanian tribes, Theodosius kept his small force in the town of Tipasa for an extended period, “like the Cunctator of old,” seeking to overthrow a more numerous enemy through stratagem and diplomacy rather than risking set battle.⁹⁷ Here Fabius seems to exemplify the idea of waiting, not rushing into battle, and looking for alternative ways to victory. After a (probably short) lacuna, Ammianus further compares Theodosius’ strategy to that which Pompey employed against Mithridates, thus adducing another *exemplum* of craftiness. To articulate this latter comparison, however, Ammianus uses Fabian language, saying that Theodosius (apparently: the name is lost in the lacuna) proceeded “via trickery and delay (*mora*), in hopes of defeating an enemy who kept foiling (*frangentem*) his attacks.”⁹⁸ Presumably this vocabulary occurred to Ammianus here

⁹⁴ Suet. *Tib.* 21.5: *ordinem aestivorum tuorum ego vero <...>, mi Tiberi, et inter tot rerum difficultates καὶ ἄλλῃ τῆν ἄποθυσμίαν ἐτόνωσεν τραπευομένων ἔθνον potuisse quemquam prudentius gerere se quam tu gesseris, existimo. ii quoque qui tecum fuerunt omnes confitentur, versum illum in te posse dici: unus homo nobis vigilando restituit rem.*

⁹⁵ *CIL* vi 40953 (Rome fragment), IL1828 = *ILS* 56 (Arretium copy).

⁹⁶ For the function of the gallery of *principes viri*, see e.g. Spannagel 1999, 326–44 and Frisch 1980 (p. 96 on Augustus and Fabius).

⁹⁷ Amm. Marc. 29.5.32: *ubi [sc. Tipasae] diutius agens, ut antiquus ille Cunctator, pro negotio consultabat, commentis potius et prudentia quam periculosis congressibus hostem... oppressurus.*

⁹⁸ Amm. Marc. 29.5. : <...> *ulterius per ambages et moras hostem frangentem suos impetus oppressurus, ut quondam Pompeius Mithridatem.* The syntax is not Fabian, however, as *mora* and *frangere* are not construed together.

because he still had the *cunctator* legend in mind, which he invoked shortly before.

In the passages just discussed, Fabius is constituted and invoked as an *exemplum* – whether a direct model for action, or a moral canon by which actions can be evaluated – because he is “good to think with.” Any military commander, and anyone else whose social persona could be conceptualized in military terms or articulated by a military metaphor, might someday need to deliberate whether to “join battle” now – i.e. undertake the social performance normally expected of one in this situation – or to pursue a larger end through different means, thus withholding the expected social performance. Such a deliberation necessarily brings alternative sets of values into competition, one set more familiar and accepted, and the other less so; it also, inevitably, implicates one’s personal reputation. The value of the Fabian *exemplum* lies precisely in its modeling of how to weigh such alternatives, and of what consequences may follow from choosing the one or the other. Fabius is “good to think with” because any Roman aristocrat may, in the fullness of time, confront the Fabian predicament for himself.

CONCLUSION: TRACES OF A DIFFERENT FABIUS

Hans Beck has recently remarked that the ancient biographical tradition as instantiated in Plutarch’s *Fabius* – from his “slowness” as a child to his criticism, in old age, of Scipio’s confrontational strategy⁹⁹ – attempts to bring the entire narrative of Fabius’ life into focus around the characteristic of *cunctatio*.¹⁰⁰ In so doing, Plutarch merely carries certain tendencies of the Fabian tradition, as analyzed above, to their logical endpoint. Yet traces remain of a different, even discordant, Fabius. In his first consulship, in 233 BC, Fabius defeated the Ligurians, received a triumph, and dedicated a temple to Virtus. Beyond this bare mention, nothing about the circumstances of this dedication is related in surviving texts. Yet it is attractive to conjecture that, at a crisis during a climactic battle, the consul restored Roman fortunes by loudly vowing a temple to the divine manifestation of the military quality that was most needed at that very moment, and so inspired his soldiers to carry the day. At any rate, the victory, triumph and temple dedication (to the most martial of goddesses) makes Fabius look like a “normal” mid-republican *nobilis* who seeks to fuse personal aggrandizement with service to the commonwealth precisely

⁹⁹ Plut. *Fab.* 1.5; 25–27. ¹⁰⁰ Beck 2000, 90; Beck 2005, 269–70, 301.

by leading troops to victory in battle – the very fusion of means and end that the *Cunctator* of legend explicitly rejects.¹⁰¹ If we accept the *cunctator* tradition as historical, we might posit a development in this figure from the relatively young first-time consul, pursuing *gloria* in traditional ways, to the mature senior statesman-general who realizes that circumstances in the Hannibalic War are different.¹⁰² Yet in his fifth consulship, in 209 BC, Fabius recaptured Tarentum and received his second triumph. He also removed from that city a colossal statue of Hercules, which he dedicated on the Capitol in Rome along with a bronze equestrian statue of himself. The pious dedication of war booty, accompanied by explicit monumentalization of the victor/dedicator, is another familiar, even banal, mode of self-advertisement among Roman *nobiles* of the middle republic.¹⁰³ The tradition about the recapture of Tarentum holds, moreover, that Bruttian soldiers betrayed the city to the Romans, and that Fabius subsequently ordered or countenanced the slaughter of all Bruttians in the city, seeking to efface the story of treachery and cause the city to appear to have been taken by force. But why should the *Cunctator* of legend be ashamed to take Tarentum by craft? Perhaps we posit that Fabius’ “delayer” phase had only to do with the crisis of 217–216,¹⁰⁴ after which he reverted to pursuing traditional forms of military glory in traditional ways (including the preference for *virtus* over stratagem).¹⁰⁵ Yet the “delayer” tradition still represents Fabius as urging this strategy upon Livius Salinator, the consul of 207, and also – as we have already seen – upon the senate in 204 when arguing against Scipio’s proposal to invade Africa.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Ligurian victory: Plut. *Fab.* 2.1; Forum Augustum *elogium* (as above, n. 95). Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.61 connects this victory with the temple of Virtus. On this temple, and M. Claudius Marcellus’ later encroachments upon it, see Ziolkowski 1992, 58–60; Palombi 1993; Beck 2005, 276–7; McDonnell 2006a, 212–28.

¹⁰² Fabius is commonly taken to be about forty in 233, the usual age for first consulships among nobles of this era (e.g. Beck 2003, 272–4). But Feig Vishnia 2007 proposes backdating Fabius’ birth by fifteen to twenty years, making his first consulship very late and making him quite old – perhaps in his seventies – during his years of great eminence (c. 217–209 BC).

¹⁰³ On Fabius’ dedications see Strabo 6. .1; Plin. *HN* 34.40; Plut. *Fab.* 22.8; *De vir. ill.* 43.6; cf. Livy 27.16.8. Discussion by Sehlmeier 1999, 125–9 with further bibliography.

¹⁰⁴ Or perhaps down to 214, when the “Fabius as shield/Marcellus as sword” metaphor still presupposes Fabius the *cunctator*. Yet some texts credit Fabius with “traditional,” personal military valor even during his dictatorship in 217, when he rescues Minucius from Hannibal’s trap: Plut. *Fab.* 12. –4; Sil. 7.598–616 (an epic *aristeia* naming about a dozen Africans who fall to Fabius’ own weapons).

¹⁰⁵ On the fall of Tarentum see Livy 27.16.6 (concealment of the treachery is mooted as the motive for the slaughter, though Fabius is not expressly implicated), and Plut. *Fab.* 22.5 (asserting that desire for concealment is the only possible explanation for the slaughter, which implies that Fabius was overcome by lust for traditional glory). On the *gloria* he gained from taking Tarentum, see Livy 27.40.9.

¹⁰⁶ Livy 27.40.8–9.

There is no easy way to untangle these strands. But one simple point does emerge from their intertwining: namely, that the “delayer” tradition does not quite manage to efface a more complex historical actuality, some of whose traces are visible but not enough of which survives to allow a compelling, all-inclusive narrative of Fabius and his political and ethical commitments to be written.¹⁰⁷ The commitments and concerns of the “delayer” tradition are available, however, and can be described. This tradition represents Fabius as advocating a distinctive approach to confronting Hannibal – an approach based on a particular interpretation of the fundamental values that underwrite Roman aristocratic action. His views, at first reviled, in time are accepted as valid: they carry the day, confer greater *gloria* upon him, and play a central role in preserving the *res publica* amidst a grave military crisis. As a result, Fabius is elevated to exemplary status for future generations. This, the *cunctator* legend, is what mattered most about Fabius to later generations.

¹⁰⁷ Beck 2005, 269–301 takes steps in this direction, yet observes that the gap between the exemplary “delayer” of legend and the historical person is vast (301).

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