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Rome's Sword and Shield: Fabius, Marcellus, and the Poetics of Paternity in Silius' *Punica*

A significant theme of Silius' *Punica* is negotiating the value and meaning of kin relationships in the context of military and national leadership. Scholarly attention to paternal and leadership roles in the *Punica* has focused on Scipio and Hannibal, primarily in their roles as successors. I argue that the episodes involving Q. Fabius Maximus (*RE* #116) and M. Claudius Marcellus (*RE* #220) offer contrasting visions of the relationship between paternal responsibilities and leadership obligations. While Scipio perceives a symmetry between these obligations, the epic's other fathers negotiate conflict between them.

The epicboth creates parallels between Fabius and Marcellus and also represents each man as a forerunner to Scipio. Both men address instructive speeches to their sons before combat (Sil. 7.539-66, 15.353-61). Critics have observed that these scenes, which have no support from the historiographical tradition, allude to Vergilian interactions between fathers and sons (Aeneas and Ascanius, Mezentius and Lausus) and reinforce the theme of heroic emulation between generations. This paper examines Fabius and Marcellus' negotiation of conflict between personal obligations and the needs of the Roman state.

Silius' Fabius willingly subordinates his need for personal and familial honor to the immediate demands of Roman troops. Citing the Senate's insult in granting Fabius' *magister equitum* Minucius equal powers, Fabius' son opposes rescuing Minucius when he is overwhelmed by Hannibal's forces. His father, however, resolves the conflict through an appeal to ancestral wisdom buttressed by the example of Camillus (Sil. 7.539-66). In gratitude, Minucius' soldiers call Fabius *pater*, while Minucius addresses him as *genitor* (Sil. 7.732-9). Fabius' exemplary performances in both consanguineous and fictive kin relationships offer a highly personalized model of negotiating conflicts between kingroup and state.

In contrast to the relationship between Fabius and Minucius, the collegiality between Marcellus and his fellow consul Crispinus provides a model of ideally functioning governance (cf. Sil. 15.350-1). Their mutual support contrasts with the images of familial conflict or bereavement used to represent the struggles between other leaders (e.g., Paulus as a bereaved mother, Sil. 9.38-43). Rather than enter conflict with his son, Marcellus' praise and instruction gain additional significance through evocation of the fathers of the *Aeneid*. His address to his son before departing on his final mission alludes to Aeneas' address to Ascanius, while the ambush that leads to his death recalls the Mezentius and Lausus episode.

The epic's multiple perspectives on the paternal relationship offer an implicit commentary on the ideals represented by the Flavian moral renovation and the emperor Domitian's self-presentation as a national father. The episodes involving Fabius and Marcellus offer exemplary images of paternal and leaderly authority. Through conflicts with subordinates and family members, Fabius negotiates the boundaries between individual, kingroup, and

state. By contrast, Marcellus offers a pattern of collegial governance and virtuous instruction that invites comparison with Vergilian images of paternity.