

DORSUO AND THE GAULS

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I

IN THE EARLY FOURTH CENTURY B.C. a band of Gauls descended upon Rome and sacked the city. It was an event of magnitude,¹ and the tradition of it was appropriately embellished with tales of Roman valour and piety. The historicity of many of these tales, however, has proved to be highly questionable. The numerous incompatible variants surrounding the career of Camillus and the expulsion of the Gauls from Rome have long been noted; the famous tale of the geese, who raised the alarm when the Gauls attempted to seize the Capitol by stealth may well be nothing more than an aetiological explanation for certain rites; Cicero knew a version of events in which the Gauls ascended the Capitol through tunnels; and Skutsch has shown that there was a tradition, of which Ennius may have been aware, that the Gauls captured the entire city, including the Capitol.² In spite of all this, there is one story associated with the Gallic sack that has yet to be subjected to a thorough, sceptical analysis: the tale of Dorsuo.³

First let us consider Livy's account, for it has been accorded a certain canonical status. Amongst the Roman defenders besieged on the Capitol was an individual whom Livy calls C. Fabius Dorsuo.⁴ Livy claims that an annual sacrifice performed by the *gens Fabia*, the clan to which Dorsuo belonged, was due at this time. Not wishing to let the ritual go unobserved, Dorsuo donned his toga in the manner

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¹ Even the Greeks took notice. Heraclides Ponticus, Theopompus, and Aristotle all noted it: Plut. *Cam.* 22.2–3; Plin. *H.N.* 3.57.

² For Camillus, see the references in Broughton 1951: 95; Cornell 1995: 316–317; Walbank 1957: 185; Momigliano 1942: 111–120, with further bibliography. For the geese, see Plut. *De fort. Rom.* 12; Plin. *H.N.* 29.57; Ael. *NA* 12.33; Lydus *Mens.* 4.114; *Serv. Dan. Aen.* 8.652; August. *De civ. D.* 2.22; and see Horsfall 1987: 72–75. For the tunnels, cf. Cic. *Caecin.* 88 and *Phil.* 3.20; see Wiseman 1979a: 39–40. On the fall of the Capitol, see Skutsch 1968: 138–142; Horsfall 1987: 63–75; cf. Sil. *Pun.* 1.625, 4.151, 6.555–556; Luc. 5.27; Tert. *Apol.* 40.9; Varro *apud* Nonius 800L.

³ Richard (1990: 186–187) interprets the tale of Dorsuo in the context of Fabian apologetic for the rash behaviour of the three Fabian ambassadors to the Gauls at Clusium (Livy 5.35.4–36.11; Plut. *Cam.* 17–18.2, *Num.* 12.6–7; Diod. 14.113.4–114.1; App. *Celt.* frs. 2–3; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 13.12.1–2; Cass. Dio fr. 25; Zon. 7.23; Flor. 1.7.6–7; Oros. 2.19.5–6—another tradition in a chaotic state, with no two versions the same), behaviour which ultimately led to the Gallic sack; so too, Caporossi 1989: 147–152, who also points out that the patrician Fabius provides a foil for the plebeian L. Albinus; Montanari 1973: 122–127.

⁴ C. Fabius Dorsuo = *RE* 68.

fit for performing religious rites (that is, he wore the *gabinus cinctus*), took up the appropriate sacred items, and strode down from the Capitol and through the enemy lines, heeding neither the Gauls' threats nor their challenges. Having reached the Quirinal hill, Dorsuo there performed the necessary rites, then promptly marched back and resumed his position defending the Capitol. And the Gauls were left stunned, perhaps by Dorsuo's sheer audacity, or perhaps even, Livy speculates, out of awe and admiration.⁵

This celebrated feat of Roman piety is related elsewhere, but not all agree with Livy's presentation. Florus places the event immediately after the tale of Manlius casting bread from the Capitol in defiance of the besieging Gauls. On the appropriate day, Florus states, Manlius sent Fabius, a *pontifex*, through the enemy's guard to the Quirinal, at which place Fabius performed a sacrifice before returning to report that the gods were pleased.⁶ Florus does not claim that the ritual was a duty which fell upon the Fabian clan alone, and perhaps, by stating that Fabius was a *pontifex* and that he was sent by Manlius, Florus is suggesting that the upkeep of the ritual was rather a responsibility of the state. In addition to this, Florus seems to imply that Fabius' mission was part of Manlius' propaganda. Dio's account is similar: Fabius the *pontifex* crossed through the Gallic pickets to perform a certain sacrifice which fell upon the college of *pontifices*. He then returned to the Capitol.⁷ Dio, however, does not mention Manlius; he calls Fabius "Kaesō,"⁸ and he does not say where Fabius went, though he does confirm that the ritual was one observed by official priests of the state rather than by the members

⁵ Livy 5.46.1–3: [2] *sacrificium erat statum in Quirinali colle genti Fabiae. ad id faciendum C. Fabius Dorsuo gabino cinctu incinctus sacra manibus gerens cum Capitolio descendisset, per medias hostium stationes egressus nihil ad vocem cuiusquam terroremve motus in Quirinalem collem pervenit*; [3] *ibique omnibus sollemniter peractis eadem revertens similiter constanti vultu graduque, satis sperans propitios esse deos quorum cultum ne mortis quidem metu prohibitus deseruisset, in Capitolium ad suos rediit seu attonitis Gallis miraculo audaciae seu religione etiam motis, cuius haudquaquam neglegens gens est. 5.52.3 (Camillus' speech): quam par vestrum factum ei est, quod in obsidione nuper in egregio adulescente C. Fabio non minore hostium admiratione quam vestra conspectum est, cum inter Gallica tela degressus ex arce sollemne Fabiae gentis in colle Quirinali obiit?*

⁶ Flor. 1.7.15–16: *Manlius . . . ut spem hostibus demeret, quamquam in summa fame, tamen ad speciem fiduciae panes ab arce iaculatus est. [16] et statim quodam die per medias hostium custodias Fabium pontificem ab arce dimisit, qui sollemne sacrum in Quirinali monte conficeret. atque ille per media hostium tela incolumnis religionis auxilio rediit propitiosque deos renuntiavit.* Münzer (1909: 1768) claims: "Aus Livius schöpft Flor. I 7,16, der nur aus Ungenauigkeit *Fabium pontificem* schreibt." Perhaps so, or perhaps Florus has simply followed a different source. Not everything in Florus can be explained with reference to Livy: cf., for example, Flor. 1.5.4 on the epiphany of the Dioscuri during the battle of Lake Regillus, conspicuously absent from Livy (Livy 2.19.1–2.20.13).

⁷ Cass. Dio fr. 25.5: *ἐπειδὴ τι τῶν ἱερῶν ἐχρῆν ὑπὸ τῶν ποτιφίκων ἄλλοθι ποῦ τῆς πόλεως γενέσθαι, Καίσιων Φάβιος, ὃν ἡ ἱερουργία ἰκνεῖτο, κατέβη τε ἐπ' αὐτὴν ἐκ τοῦ Καπιτωλίου στείλαμενος ὥσπερ εἰώθει, καὶ διὰ τῶν πολεμίων διεξελθὼν τὰ τε νομιζόμενα ἐποίησε καὶ αὐθημερὸν ἀνεκομίσθη. θαυμάζω μὲν οὖν καὶ τῶν βαρβάρων ὅτι αὐτοῦ, εἴτ' οὖν διὰ τοὺς θεοὺς εἴτε καὶ διὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν, ἔφεισαντο . . .*

⁸ Kaeso Fabius = RE 18. Concerning the name, Mommsen (1879: 319, n. 51) asserts: "So Dio fr. 25.5; Gaius bei Liv. c. 46. 52, vielleicht nur durch Abschreiberfehler." Münzer (1909: 1768) points out that the name Gaius appears twice in Livy, at 5.46.2 and 5.52.3, and in Valerius Maximus 1.1.11

of an individual *gens*. Finally, according to Appian, who cites a certain “Καύσιος” as his source, a priest called Dorsuo descended from the Capitol carrying the sacred items with him to perform an annual sacrifice to Vesta. When he reached the temple, although he found it burnt, he nonetheless performed the necessary rituals before returning to the Capitol. The Gauls, in awe of his courage, or out of reverence for his piety, did nothing to harm or hinder him.⁹

II

The identity of Appian’s “Καύσιος” is a matter of some difficulty. Appian’s text is usually emended to read “Κάσσιος,” and this Cassius is usually understood to be Cassius Hemina; thus the passage is included by Peter, Santini, Chassignet, and most recently, by Beck and Walter in their respective collections of the fragments of Hemina’s work.¹⁰ Certainly this may offer one possible explanation for the appearance of the variant that the ritual concerned was part of the cult of Vesta for, as Münzer notes, several other fragments attributed to Cassius Hemina are equally concerned with this cult.¹¹ However, if Appian did cite Hemina, he would be the only Greek writer known to have done so; moreover, no other historian, writing in either Greek or Latin, appears to have drawn upon Hemina’s work.¹² Forsythe suggests two alternatives. Firstly, that “Κλαύδιος” is perhaps an equally viable emendation of Appian’s text, and secondly that, should the emendation to “Κάσσιος” be retained, it may be that, since this passage of Appian comes from the Byzantine compilation *De virtutibus et vitiis*, a work which incorporated extracts from both Appian and Cassius Dio, the excerptor has appended Appian’s account with some reference to Dio’s.¹³ This latter idea is not especially attractive,¹⁴ but the former, that Appian’s source may have been Claudius Quadrigarius, must inevitably remain a possibility.¹⁵ Although none

too; but confusion between Kaeso and Gaius is neither unprecedented nor inexplicable: cf. Badian 1971: 106. (I am grateful to *Phoenix*’s anonymous reader for this last reference).

⁹ App. *Celt.* fr. 6: καὶ τις ἀπὸ τοῦ Καπιτωλίου κατέβαινεν ἱερεύς, ὄνομα Δόρσων, ἐπὶ ἐτήσιον δὴ τινα ἱερουργίαν ἐς τὸν τῆς Ἑστίας νεῶν στέλλων τὰ ἱερά διὰ τῶν πολεμίων εὐσταθῶς· τὸν δὲ νεῶν ἐμπερησμένον ἰδὼν ἔθυσεν ἐπὶ τοῦ συνήθους τόπου· καὶ ἐπανῆλθεν αὖθις διὰ τῶν πολεμίων αἰδεσθέντων ἢ καταπλαγέντων αὐτοῦ τὴν τόλμαν ἢ τὴν εὐσέβειαν ἢ τὴν θῦν ἱερὰν οὖσαν. δὲ μὲν δὴ κινδυνεύειν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶν ἐλόμενος ὑπ’ αὐτῶν ἐσώζετο τῶν ἱερῶν. καὶ τότε φησὶν ὧδε γενέσθαι Καύσιος ὁ Ῥωμαῖος.

¹⁰ Mommsen 1879: 320: “vielleicht Cassius Hemina”; Münzer 1909: 1768; Ogilvie 1965: 731; cf. Rawson 1976: 699 and n. 46; Peter 1914: fr. 19; Santini 1995: fr. 23; Chassignet 1999: fr. 22; Beck and Walter 2001: fr. 22.

¹¹ Münzer 1909: 1768; so too Ogilvie 1965: 731; cf. Cass. Hem. frs. 7P (= Solin. 2.14), 12P (= Plin. *H.N.* 18.7), 32P (= Prisc. 7 p. 294H).

¹² Cf. Forsythe 1990: 342; Rawson 1976: 699.

¹³ Forsythe 1990: 342–343.

¹⁴ Cf. Santini 1995: 171–172; Beck and Walter 2001: 265.

¹⁵ Quadrigarius did deal with the Gallic occupation: cf. frs. 1P (= Gell. *N.A.* 17.2.12), 4P (= Gell. *N.A.* 17.2.24), 5P (= Gell. *N.A.* 17.2.26); note also 7P (= Gell. *N.A.* 17.2.14) on Manlius.

of the fragments of Quadrigarius' work in Peter's collection actually comes from a Greek source,¹⁶ there is perhaps some evidence that there may have been at least one Greek writer who was acquainted with it. Plutarch refers to a treatise on chronology by a certain Κλώδιος, and this Clodius may possibly be Claudius Quadrigarius.¹⁷ But whether Appian used Quadrigarius is another matter entirely.

Appian's source was certainly a Roman. Appian's text is secure on that point. But since the identity of this Roman depends on a textual emendation, caution is necessary. If Appian did draw (directly?) upon Cassius Hemina, then his version would presumably represent one of the earliest, for Hemina was a near contemporary of the Elder Cato.¹⁸ On the other hand, if he consulted Quadrigarius, then the version he preserves may represent a later stage of the tradition. Claudius Quadrigarius wrote in the late 80s.¹⁹ However, it seems that Quadrigarius took an interest in the histories of C. Acilius, for he evidently translated them into Latin.²⁰ If Quadrigarius followed Acilius, and if Appian in turn drew upon Quadrigarius, then Appian's version of the tale of Dorsuo could conceivably be quite early indeed for Acilius' history was published in 141.²¹ At any rate, one thing can be stated with some degree of safety: the passage clearly represents a Roman tradition significantly different from that found in Livy.

In addition to the immediately obvious discrepancy concerning the ritual performed by Dorsuo, Appian's account is also noteworthy for one other detail. Unlike Livy, Valerius Maximus, Florus, and Dio who all claim that Dorsuo was a member of the *gens Fabia*, Appian, who promises to be diligent on matters of nomenclature,²² simply refers to him as Dorsuo; no *praenomen* or *nomen* is specified, and so there is perhaps no reason to assume automatically that

¹⁶Peter 1914: 205–237; Bastian 1983. The fragments come from Gellius, Livy, Nonius, Servius, Priscianus, Macrobius, Orosius, Diomedes, Lactantius, and Seneca.

¹⁷Plut. *Num.* 1.2. On this, see Frier 1979: 122–124; Wiseman 1979b: 19. Peter (1914: cccxxviii–ccxxix), however, rejects the connection with Claudius Quadrigarius and instead equates Plutarch's Clodius with a certain <Paulus> Claudius mentioned by Appian (*Gall.* 1.3).

¹⁸Rawson (1976: 690) and Frier (1979: 208–209) argue that Hemina was publishing his work before the Third Punic War. Forsythe (1990: 327–333), however, argues that he may have been writing as late as the 130s or even 120s.

¹⁹According to Velleius Paterculus (2.9.6) he was a contemporary of Sisenna, Rutilius Rufus, and Valerius Antias. The last datable fragments are 83P (= Gell. *N.A.* 20.6.11) and 84P (= Oros. 5.20.6), which refer to the events of 87 and 82 respectively. Frier 1979: 148–149.

²⁰Livy 25.39.12, 35.14.5; Rawson 1985: 219. Frier (1979: 249–250) argues that Quadrigarius only translated a portion of Acilius' history. Beloch (1926: 105) is not persuasive.

²¹Livy *Per.* 53.

²²App. *Praef.* 13. Although his text is fragmentary, it is still quite evident that Appian strove to live up to his promise. In his Gallic history, he does refer to Caesar, Cato, and Camillus by *cognomen* only (e.g., frs. 1, 16, 17, 18; although note *praef.* 1.6: Γάιός τε Καῖσαρ), but his introduction of Camillus is missing, so too, presumably, that of Cato and, in any case, these people required little by way of introduction. Appian's usual practice is to refer to people by their gentilicial name, but he may well have provided a full name for each individual when they appeared for the first time in his text; note *Celt.* fr. 13 on Appian's treatment of Papirius Carbo. The Fabii are all explicitly identified as Fabii (*Celt.* frs. 1.2, 2, 3), indeed even when it is perfectly obvious that the individual in question is a

Appian or, more importantly, his Roman source believed Dorsuo to be a Fabius. Furthermore, Plutarch provides a list of the families that were represented by the defenders on the Capitol. He names the Manlii, the Sulpicii, the Postumii, and the Papirii;²³ but the Fabii are absent, and given the prominent and exemplary nature of the tale of Dorsuo, that absence is striking.

An explanation for Plutarch's silence may perhaps be found in his *Camillus*. As the Gauls drew near, many of the elderly statesmen elected to remain behind in the city rather than flee, and so that their deaths might be of some benefit, the *pontifex maximus* performed the rites necessary for a *devotio*. Livy calls the *pontifex maximus* M. Folius and, although there are textual difficulties, this seems to have been accepted.²⁴ But Plutarch, whose text appears to be secure at this point, calls the *pontifex maximus* M. Fabius.²⁵ Presumably Plutarch has followed a tradition wherein the Fabian exploit of the Gallic sack was the performance of the *devotio*, the self-sacrifice of the old men, and not the tale of Dorsuo. This could be stated with greater confidence if Appian's source was indeed Claudius Quadrigarius, for Plutarch may have been familiar with his work and it is therefore not inconceivable that he used him for his account of the sack of Rome. The variant found in Florus and Dio, according to which the Fabius who descended from the Capitol was a *pontifex*, may perhaps then represent an intermediary stage in the development of the tradition, where Fabius the *pontifex* and Dorsuo have only recently been equated. At this stage Fabius Dorsuo has not yet shed his connections with the state religion and hence, in Dio's account certainly, but possibly in Florus' too, the rites he allegedly performed are not yet concerned with the *gens Fabia* alone.

Dorsuo is usually assumed to be Fabius' *cognomen*. Certainly Livy and Valerius Maximus present it as such. However, the name appears here for the first time, and although there is some evidence for other Fabii Dorsuones, they are not only few in number (only two others are known) but also relatively unimportant, and the evidence for their *cognomina* is meagre and arguably dubious. The first of these is M. Fabius, consul in 345. His *cognomen* is the better attested, for Livy calls him M. Fabius Dorsuo and the *cognomen* appears also in the Chronographus 354, with possible derivative variants in the Fasti Hydatiani and the Chronicon Paschale.²⁶ The second is the consul of 273. He is almost everywhere called

Fabius (*Celt.* fr. 2). *Celt.* fr. 6 is clearly the first reference to Dorsuo in Appian's text (καὶ τις ἀπὸ τοῦ Καπιτωλίου κατέβαιναν ἱερεῖς, ὄνομα Δόρσων . . .). If Appian had found a *praenomen* or a *nomen*, it is reasonable to suppose that he would have included it here.

²³ Plut. *De fort. Rom.* 12: Μαλλίου καὶ Σερούσιος καὶ Ποστούμιος καὶ Παπυρίου. There are obvious difficulties with the second name in Plutarch's list. Wytenbach suggested "Σερούσιος." Münzer (1932: 732), however, rightly read "Sulpicii." Cf. also Livy 5.47.9–10, 5.48.8, and Plut. *Cam.* 28.4 for Sulpicii on the Capitol.

²⁴ Livy 5.41.3; Ampelius 20.7 (also with textual difficulties); Flor. 1.7.9–10 (but Florus provides no name); see further Broughton 1951: 96, Ogilvie 1965: 726.

²⁵ Plut. *Cam.* 21.3.

²⁶ Livy 7.28.1; Degraffi 1947: 406–407. The Fasti Hydatiani has *Bursone*, the Chronicon Paschale Βούλσωνος. This Fabius = RE 69. He may be the same as M. Fabius, RE 24, who, in turn, may

C. Fabius Licinus. The only exception to this is Velleius Paterculus, who seems to preserve the *cognomen* Dorsuo.²⁷

Variant traditions concerning the forms of names should not be unexpected, for variant traditions of all manner are to be found in the historiographical tradition.²⁸ Livy and Velleius both wrote comparatively late and so they could draw upon a large number of disparate works and incorporate material from numerous and varied family traditions into their histories. In all this morass, Livy clearly found a tradition where Dorsuo was one of the *cognomina* used by the *gens Fabia* and so the appearance of a second Dorsuo in his work is not at all surprising. Velleius also appears to have stumbled across such a tradition; hence he calls C. Fabius Licinus "Fabius Dorsuo." The compiler of the Chronographus 354 evidently followed a late tradition too, for he incorporated three of the four spurious dictator years into his chronological scheme.²⁹ Drummond has argued persuasively that the dictator years originated with Atticus and his *Liber annalis*.³⁰ Since Atticus compiled a genealogy of the *gens Fabia*,³¹ he was presumably familiar with the traditions of that family, and it may well be through him that the name Fabius Dorsuo entered the chronographical tradition.

The paucity of the evidence for the *cognomen* Dorsuo may suggest that it was part of a late tradition, and indeed the very name itself may well be entirely artificial. There is no evidence that the connection was ever made in antiquity, but the most obvious word from which Dorsuo could have been derived is *dorsum*, "back," a word often used in reference to a beast of burden.³² Livy, Valerius Maximus, and Appian claim that Dorsuo carried the necessary *sacra* with him when he descended from the Capitol, and Valerius Maximus adds that, in addition to carrying the sacred items in his hands, as Livy relates, he bore them on his

be M. Fabius Ambustus, *RE* 44; cf. *RE* 6.1746, on number 24: "Vielleicht ist er mit M. Fabius Ambustus identisch . . . vielleicht aber auch mit M. Fabius Dorsuo."

²⁷Vell. Pat. 1.14.7. He is *RE* 70. See Broughton 1951: 196–197 and n. 1. Caporossi (1989: 147, n. 1) sums up the evidence: "Il *cognomen* in Livio (5,46,2 cfr. 7,28,1) e Valerio Massimo (cit. [= 1.1.11]) è Dorsuo, mentre la forma Δόρσων è conosciuta anche da Velleio (1,14,7) per il console del 273 e dalla Cronaca di Idazio per quello del 345."

²⁸The Valerii, for instance, tried to claim that the first dictator was a Valerius (Festus 216L; Livy 2.18.6–7; see Ogilvie 1965: 282–283), while the Licinii claimed that the first plebeian consul was a Licinius (*De vir. ill.* 20.2; note also Livy 7.9.5). See also Livy 9.46.14–15, 30.26.8; Val. Max. 2.2.9; Ampelius 18.6; Plut. *Pomp.* 13.7, *Fab.* 1.2, 24.3; *De vir. ill.* 32.1 for several variants of the tradition that Q. Fabius Rullianus received the *cognomen* Maximus. But Polybius (3.87.6) claimed that Q. Fabius Verrucosus was the first of that *gens* to receive the name.

²⁹Degrassi 1947: 410, 414, 420. Chr. 354 appears to have consuls for 301. The compilers of the Chronicon Paschale and the Fasti Hydatiani also seem to have been aware of the dictator years: see Drummond 1978: 550–551. On the value of the consular *fasti* for early Rome, see Wiseman 1995: 103–106.

³⁰Drummond 1978: 556 and *passim*.

³¹Nep. *Att.* 18.3–4.

³²For example, Hor. *Sat.* 1.9.20–21: *demitto auriculas, ut iniquae mentis asellus, / cum gravius dorso subiit onus*; cf. also Virg. *G.* 3.116.

shoulders too.³³ The name may be little more than a descriptive appellation and, perhaps, a pun.³⁴

III

The tale of Dorsuo is profoundly visual and inherently dramatic. There is no dialogue, nor is any necessary. Dorsuo is clearly designated as a Roman by his toga, and as a Roman performing a religious duty by his toga being drawn over his head. Any further, or more specific, identification would be unnecessary. If the episode were to be presented through a visual medium, the Gauls too would be readily identifiable by their garb and fierce appearance, and their reaction, their awe of the Roman's piety and shock at his audacity, could be portrayed easily enough. Yet, in spite of its dramatic qualities, the tale of Dorsuo may not have been suitable material for the stage,³⁵ firstly, because there is no dialogue, and secondly, because the story itself is simplistic and would scarcely suffice to entertain even the most unsophisticated of audiences; and unless it formed a single act of some longer performance, the whole episode is just too brief. But a painting is another matter.

Artistic endeavour was not generally considered a respectable pastime for the members of Rome's nobility and, with only one notable exception, none of that order deigned to try their hand with brush or chisel. That exception was C. Fabius Pictor, C. Fabius the Painter, and he earned his *cognomen* for his efforts painting the walls of the temple of *Salus*.³⁶ Although Pictor's work survived for over three centuries and was only lost during the reign of Claudius when a fire ravaged the temple, the subject matter of his paintings went unrecorded and is hence unknown. But one thing is certain: the location of the temple of *Salus*. It was on the Quirinal.³⁷

According to Livy and Valerius Maximus, *Fabius* Dorsuo came down from the Capitol, went to the Quirinal, and there performed certain rites for his family. Florus, too, claims that a Fabius went to the Quirinal, although Florus does not specify for which cult he performed rites. This connection between the Fabii and the Quirinal has been explained with reference to the *Lupercalia* and the *Luperci Fabiani*,³⁸ but the explanation is inadequate. The *Luperci* ran around or near the Palatine hill, not the Quirinal.³⁹ Apart from Pictor's paintings in the temple of

³³ Val. Max. 1.1.11: *manibus umerisque sacra gerens*.

³⁴ *Dorsum* could also mean a ridge or mountain top (e.g., Caes. *B. Gall.* 7.44; Suet. *Iul.* 44; Livy 41.18.9, 44.4.4)—a reference, perhaps, to Dorsuo's descent from the Capitol?

³⁵ On the appearance of historical stories on the stage, and the influence of the stage on the historiographical tradition, see Wiseman 1994: 1–22.

³⁶ *RE* 122; see Cic. *Tusc.* 1.4; Val. Max. 8.14.6; Plin. *H.N.* 35.19.

³⁷ Cf. Platner and Ashby 1929: s.v. *Salus, aedes*; Coarelli 1999a: 182 and 1999c: 230.

³⁸ Ogilvie 1965: 730–731; more recently, Smith 1996: 200.

³⁹ Varr. *Ling.* 6.34; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.80.1; Plut. *Rom.* 21.4 and 4.1–2; see further Wissowa 1912: 209; Wiseman 1995: 81–82.

Salus and the tale of Dorsuo, no link whatsoever between the *gens Fabia* and the Quirinal is known.⁴⁰

Although there is no immediate connection between the cult of *Salus* and the Gauls,⁴¹ the latter were certainly the threat *par excellence* to the welfare, the *salus*, of Rome,⁴² and so it is not inconceivable that Pictor's paintings in that temple may have contained some reference to the Gallic siege. Perhaps he painted a scene in which an unidentified Roman, with his toga drawn over his head signifying that he was functioning in some religious capacity, strode confidently through a crowd of startled Gauls. This Roman may have been depicted carrying religious equipment—something, at least, to justify his being dubbed “Dorsuo.”⁴³ Such would surely be not at all inappropriate for the temple of *Salus*.

Appian claims that Dorsuo carried out rites for Vesta, not *Salus*. However, the two deities were not unrelated, for the upkeep of Vesta's cult was intrinsically linked with the welfare of Rome,⁴⁴ and in any case, the cult of *Salus* did not exist until the late fourth century. If the tale of Dorsuo was known in some form before

⁴⁰ Gagé (1966) suggests that Quirinus was the patron deity of the *gens Fabia* and this would certainly offer an explanation for the claim that Dorsuo went to the Quirinal hill. However, Gagé can adduce no solid evidence for his thesis beyond the tale of Dorsuo itself and the fact that a member of the *gens* was once *flamen Quirinalis*. Although there is further evidence for some religious rite that was connected specifically with the *gens Fabia* (cf. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 9.19.1), the only possible evidence for its location comes from the story of Dorsuo. But the tradition concerning Dorsuo is simply too contradictory to support the idea of a cult on the Quirinal under the supervision of the Fabii. Nor were the Fabii Sabine: cf. Ruggiero 1984: 259–265, 280–282; Gagé 1966: 1593. Note Poucet 1972: 106, 122. Holleman 1984: 505–506 is not convincing.

⁴¹ A connection between *Salus* and the Gauls does appear on the coins of D. Iunius Silanus, moneyer in 91 (*RE* 162; Crawford 1974: nos. 337/2d, 2e, 2f). On the obverse of these appears the head of *Salus* encircled by a torque, a distinctly Gallic piece of jewellery. The temple of *Salus* was vowed by the consul C. Iunius Bubulcus Brutus (*RE* 62). As censor, C. Iunius let the contract for its construction (307; Livy 9.43.25) and, as dictator, he presided over the dedication ceremony (on the Nones of August 303: Livy 10.1.9; Cic. *Att.* 4.1.4, *Sest.* 131; see Coarelli 1999c: 229). But D. Iunius Silanus was also descended from the Manlii Torquati (Cic. *Fin.* 1.24; cf. also Tac. *Ann.* 3.76; and see further Münzer *RE* 10.1089; Crawford 1974: 339) and this is the most obvious explanation for the torque. Clearly, though, it was not inappropriate for *Salus* to be connected with something Gallic.

⁴² Cf. Livy 10.26.13, 10.10.13, 10.21.2 on Roman terror of the Gauls; on the ritualistic burying alive of Gauls and Greeks (Plut. *Marc.* 3.3–4; Livy 22.57.6; Zonar. 8.19; Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 83), cf. Wiseman 1995: 119; Beard, North, and Price 1998: 80–82. Beard, North, and Price draw attention to the coincidence of the punishment of Vestals for unchaste behaviour (which, they argue, posed a threat to the welfare of the state) and the performance of these rites.

⁴³ Note how Dorsuo's preparations and departure are entirely passed over, and how he is usually described in *mediis rebus*: Livy 5.46.2: *C. Fabius Dorsuo gabino cintu incinctus sacra manibus gerens cum de Capitolio descendisset*; Val. Max. 1.1.11: *C. Fabius Dorsuo . . . gabino ritu cinctus, manibus umerisque sacra gerens, per medias hostium stationes in Quirinalem collem pervenit*. It is usually assumed that Fabius Pictor's paintings represented the military exploits of C. Iunius Bubulcus Brutus, the man who vowed and dedicated the temple of *Salus* (see above, n. 41). Cf., for example, Coarelli 1999c: 229; Harris 1979: 262: “presumably a view of the triumphing dictator C. Iunius Bubulcus.” But why should Pictor have celebrated the *res gestae* of a statesman from another family?

⁴⁴ See Beard, North, and Price 1998: 52–54.

Pictor painted the temple of *Salus*, it may be that it was simply believed that the hero of the tale had performed rites for Vesta. This would certainly give the episode a wider applicability and make it into a general *exemplum* of Roman piety. This would be appropriate, too, if the hero were hitherto simply some unspecified or even unidentified Roman.

Valerius Maximus' account of Dorsuo's exploit is essentially the same as Livy's. But Valerius adds one further detail. According to Livy, Dorsuo carried the *sacra* in his hands, but, as noted earlier, according to Valerius, he carried them in his hands and *on his shoulders*. From where did Valerius get this extra detail? Since Pliny states that Pictor's work survived down to his own day, it is not impossible that Valerius was familiar with it and took the additional detail from his own observations of the hypothesized painting itself. The image of a man carrying *sacra* on his shoulders is naturally evocative of the tale of Aeneas, who escaped from Troy carrying his father on his shoulders and carrying also the Palladium, which was, according to tradition, later placed in the temple of Vesta.⁴⁵ The association is tenuous but, if Cassius Hemina was Appian's source, it may easily be justified.⁴⁶ Other fragments from Hemina's work suggest that that writer had some interest in the cult of Vesta. He may have been looking for useful material.

Florus and Dio do not identify the cult for which Dorsuo performed rites. Florus claims that Fabius went to the Quirinal, but nothing more, and Dio merely states that he carried out certain religious duties for which the college of pontiffs was responsible. Their silence can perhaps be explained. The tradition that the rites performed by Dorsuo were for Vesta may have been deemed slightly problematic, for another tradition held that, as the Gauls approached the city, the Vestal Virgins were evacuated to Caere. They allegedly took the sacred fire of Vesta with them, while the other *sacra* were buried in the *Doliola*.⁴⁷ Only Plutarch records that religious equipment of any kind was stored on the Capitol, although he makes it clear that the Vestals took the sacred fire and the *sacra* of Vesta with them when they fled to Caere.⁴⁸ But, according to Appian, Dorsuo

⁴⁵ Virg. *Aen.* 2.708: *ipse subibo umeris*; 2.717: *tu, genitor, cape sacra manu patriosque penatis*; 2.721–723: *haec fatus latos umeros subiectaque colla / veste super fulvique insternor pelle leonis, / succedoque oneri*; cf. Schol. Veron. *Aen.* 2.717: *<Aenean cum dis pena>tibus umeris impositis*. For the Palladium, see Ov. *Fast.* 6.424–438, *Tr.* 3.1.29; Cic. *Scaur.* 48; Plut. *Cam.* 20.5; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.69.2–4, 2.66.3–5; Livy 26.27.14.

⁴⁶ The resemblance between the tale of Dorsuo and the tradition of the departure of Aeneas from Troy has been noted: cf. Scholz 1989: 176; Forsythe 1990: 342; Santini 1995: 133. On the exemplary nature of the image, note Zanker 1988: 202–203.

⁴⁷ Livy 5.39.11, 5.40.7–10; Plut. *Cam.* 20.3, 21.1–2; Flor. 1.7.11–12; Val. Max. 1.1.10.

⁴⁸ Plut. *Cam.* 20.3: ἐν πρώτοις δὲ τῶν ἱερῶν ἃ μὲν εἰς τὸ Καπιτώλιον ἀνεσκευάσαντο, τὸ δὲ πῦρ τῆς Ἑστίας αἱ παρθένοι μετὰ τῶν ἱερῶν ἔφευγον ἀρπασάμεναι. Plutarch also knew of the tradition that sacred items were buried in the *Doliola* (*Cam.* 20.8), although he asserts that the *Doliola* was under the temple of Quirinus (ὑπὸ τῶν νεῶν τοῦ Κυρίνου), which stood on the Quirinal hill. Plutarch is clearly mistaken. According to Varro, the *Doliola* was near the *Cloaca Maxima* (*Ling.* 5.157; see Coarelli 1983: 282–298 and 1995: 21), and likely therefore to be near the temple of Vesta. Livy

carried sacred items with him when he descended from the Capitol, and this may have been judged inconsistent with the tradition that the *sacra* were either hidden underground in the *Doliola* or carried away to another city.⁴⁹ Of course, if Appian's source was Quadrigarius, and if Plutarch took the detail that *sacra* were placed on the Capitol from that writer too, then this inconsistency may not have existed in Quadrigarius' account.⁵⁰ However, the claim that the *sacra* were evacuated to Caere evidently was, or became, the dominant tradition and for this reason it may have been felt desirable to revise the nature of the rites performed and thus smooth away any possible difficulties.

The tale of Dorsuo was an exemplary one of Roman piety and it may be that the Fabii later claimed the hero as one of their own. This would not be difficult if the origins of the story were indeed to be found in one of Fabius Pictor's paintings in the temple of *Salus*, and the claim that Fabius Dorsuo went to the Quirinal could perhaps have been used to justify the appearance of the painting in that temple. No other connection between the Fabii and the Quirinal is known. At some stage, perhaps in the effort to strengthen their claim, the Fabii "found" other Fabii Dorsuones. This is not to suggest that they invented historical figures, but that they simply renamed certain minor individuals in their lengthy catalogue of statesmen. Perhaps for the same reason it was claimed that Dorsuo carried out rites pertinent to the *gens Fabia* alone.⁵¹

describes the *Doliola* as *proximo aedibus flaminis Quirinalis* (5.40.8). The latter building is nowhere else mentioned in extant literature (Palombi 1995), but it is easy to imagine how such a phrase could have been misread to give Plutarch's version. The temple of Quirinus may have been built at a considerably later date: cf. Platner and Ashby 1929: 438–439; Coarelli 1999b: 185–186. No possible explanation for why Dorsuo went to the Quirinal is to be found here, *pace* Caporossi (1989: 149–150), who uses Plutarch's ὑπὸ τῶν νεῶν τοῦ Κυρίνου and Livy's *proximo aedibus flaminis Quirinalis* to argue for a link between the cult of Vesta and the Quirinal hill, and thus reconcile the variant traditions.

⁴⁹Palmer (1970: 164) claims: "The Quirinal flamen and the Vestals were absent from Rome. Therefore the flamen's attention to Vesta's cult was assumed by a pontiff." Not only is Palmer's use of the sources highly selective (a blend of Appian and Florus/Dio), he passes over the difficulty that Appian's version presupposes that Vesta's *sacra* were on the Capitol.

⁵⁰According to Plut. *Num.* 1.2, Clodius claimed in his chronological work that the records of early Rome were all lost when the Gauls sacked the city; and none of the fragments of Claudius Quadrigarius deal with any event prior to the sack. If these two are equated (see above, n. 17), it is not inconceivable that the views credited to Claudius by Plutarch in his *Numa* could have inspired him to reject the tradition of a large-scale evacuation to Caere, especially if that evacuation involved the preservation of material objects.

⁵¹Münzer (*RE* [1909] 6.1768), Santini (1995: 173), and Beck and Walter (2001: 265) suggest that Livy's version may be the earliest because Livy claims that Dorsuo performed rites for the *gens Fabia*. But Livy relied predominantly on late annalists. His version surely represents a later formulation of the tradition. Although the historian Q. Fabius Pictor may seem an obvious suspect for the development of the tradition that Dorsuo was a Fabius, there may be reason (further to the suggestion made above that the Fabian hero of the Gallic sack may have originally been the *pontifex maximus* who led the *devotio*) to believe otherwise. I hope to elaborate on this elsewhere. Other candidates besides Pictor do exist: note, for example, Q. Fabius Maximus Servilianus, who appears to have written, among other things, on pontifical law (cf. Macrobi. *Sat.* 1.16.25; cf. Forsythe 1994: 57) and see Frier 1979:

If this is what happened, it would not be unprecedented. Other exemplary figures, not originally connected to a specific *gens*, appear to have been subsequently claimed by individual families. Wiseman has recently argued that L. Iunius Brutus, the man who allegedly expelled Tarquinius Superbus, was claimed by the Iunii in the late fourth century; up to that point he was presumably known simply as Brutus, for that name alone is all that the story requires.⁵² Horatius Cocles who held the bridge may not originally have been a Horatius. Cicero, it seems, knew him only as Cocles, and although Polybius, the earliest source for the tale, does call him Horatius, he is somewhat circumspect about doing so.⁵³ Furthermore, the tale of Cocles may have been aetiological or at the least used aetiological to explain a statue which stood in the *area Vulcani* in the forum,⁵⁴ and certain developments in the story may well have arisen in explanation of the specific features of this statue. Pais suggested long ago that the monument in question may have been an image of the god Vulcan, depicted as the crippled Hephaestus.⁵⁵ According to Polybius, Cocles died defending the bridge; later versions claimed that he survived, but added that he was wounded in the buttocks.⁵⁶ This detail also conveniently served to explain why Cocles appeared nowhere else in the tradition: his lameness prevented him from ever attaining the consulship.⁵⁷

IV

Although there is no evidence for the subject matter of Fabius Pictor's paintings in the temple of *Salus*, it may be worth contemplating the possibility that Pictor

246–252 on the possible existence of an N. Pictor, but it is not necessary to assume that the tradition owed its existence to the intervention of one individual writer. False claims could be, and evidently were, made in funeral speeches and on the inscriptions accompanying *imagines*: cf. Livy 8.40.4–5; Cic. *Brut.* 15.62. It was this sort of material, it may be supposed, that was consulted by Atticus when he compiled his genealogy of the *gens Fabia*.

⁵² Wiseman 2003: 32–33 on the claim; 23–24, 27 on the story of Brutus. Note that the Iunii subsequently used the *cognomen* Brutus, presumably to strengthen their claim, but also to reap the benefits of having as one of their own the man who expelled the last of the kings and founded the republic.

⁵³ Cic. *Parad.* 1.12, *Leg.* 2.10, *Off.* 1.61; Polyb. 6.55.1: Κόκλιν γὰρ λέγεται τὸν Ὠράτιον ἐπικληθέντα. Horatius Cocles (*RE* 9) is the only member of the family recorded as having that *cognomen*.

⁵⁴ Aetiological story: Pais 1906: 157–160; further references in Walbank 1957: 740. On the statue, usually said to be of Cocles, cf. Gell. *N.A.* 4.5.1–4; Livy 2.10.12; Plut. *Publ.* 16.7; Plin. *H.N.* 34.22; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 5.25.2; *De vir. ill.* 11.2. See Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.54.2 and Festus 370L for alternative traditions. See further Coarelli 1983: 161–178.

⁵⁵ Pais 1906: 157–160; see also Coarelli 1983: 174–177; Cornell 1995: 162–163; Forsythe 1994: 253. Cf. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 5.23.2; Plut. *Publ.* 16.5; *De vir. ill.* 11.1 on the meaning of the *cognomen* Cocles. Pais (1906: 157–158) also finds the origins of this in the statue of Vulcan.

⁵⁶ Polyb. 6.55.1–4; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 5.24.3; Plut. *Publ.* 16.6–7, *De fort. Rom.* 3. See also Ogilvie 1965: 258.

⁵⁷ Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 5.25.3; App. *Reg. fr.* 10.

painted some scene in which not only Gauls but also a Roman priest appeared. The latter subject would certainly not be inappropriate for a temple wall. This painting may have been, or may have been interpreted or explained as, a scene from the Gallic occupation of Rome. The scene may have commemorated the exploit of Dorsuo, or, if that story did not yet exist, the scene may have provided the stimulus for its creation.

If Cassius Hemina was the source of Appian's version of the tale of Dorsuo, this may explain why the hero was said to have gone to the temple of Vesta, but, in any case, the cult of Vesta was symbolic for the city of Rome and so it would have been natural to have Dorsuo perform rites for that cult, especially when the very future of the city hung in the balance. Since Dorsuo allegedly carried *sacra* with him as he descended from the Capitol, revision of the story would have been necessary when the tradition that the paraphernalia of the cult of Vesta were taken to Caere was asserted. Since Pictor's painting was on the Quirinal, it would be reasonable to have Dorsuo go there instead. This does not mean that it was believed that he performed rites for *Salus*, for that cult did not exist in 390, but simply that he went to some place on that hill, perhaps somewhere in the region where the temple of *Salus* later stood.

Since the tale was exemplary, the Fabii may later have claimed Dorsuo as a member of their own clan. It appears that the Fabian hero of the Gallic sack may originally have been the *pontifex maximus* who performed the rites for the *devotio* of the old men and Dorsuo may initially have been equated with this individual; hence the version found in Florus and Dio. The final stage in the development of the tradition was presumably the claim that Dorsuo performed rites for the *gens Fabia* alone. Perhaps this was a necessary concession to secure the Fabian claim. This, then, is the version found in Livy and Valerius Maximus.

The argument is of course conjectural and none of it can be proven. But it does offer a possible explanation for the numerous variants that appear in the historiographical tradition of what is essentially a very rudimentary tale. It offers some explanation too for why Plutarch fails to include the Fabii amongst the families from which those who held the Capitol came, and for Livy's and Valerius Maximus' otherwise mysterious claim that Fabius Dorsuo performed a ritual for his family on the Quirinal hill. If the historicity of any part of the episode is to be asserted, alternative explanations for these several difficulties must first be found.

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