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I. Stage Money (*fabam mimum*: Cic. Att. 1.16.13)

WALTER ALLEN, JR.

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA

Eight years ago, in despair of a valid solution, I declined to add one more explanation to the already large bibliography on the enigma of the phrase *fabam mimum* in Cic. Att. 1.16.13.¹ Since the words occur in an important letter frequently read with classes, they have constituted a vexation to generations of scholars, with sometimes heated disagreements. I now believe that the phrase is based on the materials the Romans used for stage money in the theater.

This is the passage in question:

Sed heus tu! videsne consulatum illum nostrum quem Curio antea ἀποθέωσιν vocabat, si hic factus erit, *fabam mimum* futurum? Qua re, ut opinor, φιλοσοφητέον, id quod tu facis, et istos consulatus non flocci faciteon.

The *fabam* is the general reading of the MSS. The *mimum* is probably the preferred reading for that word, although there is some lesser manuscript authority for *fabam nummum* or *fabanumum*, to which I shall revert later, and for other alternatives that I shall not discuss.

It is traditional, although not necessarily relevant, to point out the similar turn of phrase in Seneca, *Apocol.* 9.3 (the opinion of

¹ W. Allen, Jr., "The Lucii Afranii of Cic. Att. 1.16.13," *TAPA* 82 (1951) 127-35.

Janus): "Olim, inquit, magna res erat deum fieri; iam fabam mimum fecistis." The MSS. read *fabam* or *fama*, although the editors have been inclined to force the Senecan passage to conform to the Ciceronian phrase that they did not claim to understand. There is no question about the reading *mimum* in Seneca.

The whole passage in Cicero requires elucidation before we come to the *fabam mimum*. The elder Curio is of course the father of the younger Curio who later plays a prominent role in the years 59² and 50-49.³ The politics of both father and son seem unpredictable, if not worse.⁴

The elder Curio, although usually considered one of the *Optimates*, helped Clodius in early 61 B.C. before Clodius was actually brought to trial (Cic. *Att.* 1.14.5); and at that time Curio consequently was the target of some of Cicero's vituperation (*Att.* 1.16.1). Curio spoke in Clodius' defense at the trial (see below, note 6). In the senate on the fifteenth of May, which was after Clodius' acquittal, Cicero remarked acidly upon Curio's purchase of a luxurious estate in the Sullan proscription (*Att.* 1.16.9 f., with the comment by Tyrrell and Purser). Sometime in the course of these disputes Curio wrote a pamphlet or speech against Cicero, and Clodius as quaestor held *contiones*. Hence the reason for the bygone (*antea*) praise by Curio, who might well have had less than kindly feelings towards Cicero at the time of *Att.* 1.16 (late June or July, 61). Yet Curio was still one of the *boni*, and in 59 it was to him that the younger Curio disclosed the plot of Vettius,⁵ which was thereupon reported to Pompey by the elder Curio.

In July of 58, when Cicero was in exile, he was distressed by the unexpected dissemination of his speech *In P. Clodium et C.*

² See my discussion of the younger Curio's significance in the curious Vettius episode: "The 'Vettius Affair' Once More," *TAPA* 81 (1950) 153-63. My basic thesis is not affected by the controversy about the dates of the letters concerned, in which Miss Taylor appears to have the better of it: P. A. Brunt, "Cicero: *Ad Atticum* 2.24," *CQ* 47 (1953) 62-4; L. R. Taylor, "On the Date of *Ad Atticum* 2.24," *CQ* 48 (1954) 181 f.

³ There is a good summary of the life of the younger Curio in Tyrrell and Purser, *The Correspondence of Cicero* 2^a.236; with further discussion in 3^a.lxxv-lxxxiv, xcvi-ci. In *RE* there are biographies of both Curio's by Münzer, "Scribonius (Curio)," numbers 10 and 11, *RE* 2A (1923) 862-76.

⁴ L. R. Taylor, *Party Politics in the Age of Caesar* (Berkeley 1949), 15, 218, cf. 224.

⁵ Cic. *Att.* 2.24.2; see also my paper on this topic (above, note 2).

Curionem, which he had composed as a reply to Curio's attack but which he had not published.⁶ No doubt Cicero's enemies thought to alienate Curio. Cicero thought he could disavow the speech for reasons of style and since he had never openly quarreled with Curio!⁷ In August of that year Cicero was surprised that Curio favored him in the senate at Rome, and he wondered if Curio had not read the speech (*Att.* 3.15.3). Hence we may suspect that *Att.* 1.16.13, with its *antea*, reflects only a temporary and not very serious coolness between Cicero and the elder Curio⁸ when the latter and some other nobles rallied to Clodius' aid in the affair of the Bona Dea.

The *nostrum*, I feel sure, is to be regarded as the equivalent of *meum*, and we are to understand that Cicero was referring only to his own consulship.⁹ The term "apotheosis" is a somewhat extravagant fashion of referring to the fact that by his deeds in 63 Cicero was *parens patriae*, the new Romulus, *conservator rei publicae*.¹⁰ Such praise by Curio was therefore little more than an expression of allegiance to the Optimate point of view that

⁶ Cic. *Att.* 3.12.2. The fragments of Cicero's speech and a discussion of all the circumstances are to be found in *Schol. Bob. (Ciceronis Orationum scholiastae* 2, ed. Stangl) 85-91, and in F. Schoell's edition of *Ciceronis Orationum deperditarum fragmenta* (Teubner ed., fasc. 29, Leipzig 1917) 439-51. In the possibly confused sequence of events I have followed Schanz-Hosius (*Gesch. d. röm. Lit.*⁴ 3.145 f.) in assuming a separate pamphlet by Curio and that Cicero's speech is different from his remarks on May 15. It appears that the speech may have, I should add, utilized some of Cicero's remarks of May 15.

⁷ Cic. *Att.* 3.12.2: "Sed quia numquam accidit ut cum eo verbo uno concertarem . . ."; just as in the preceding month he had urged Quintus to be on guard against Quintus' reputed authorship of an epigram which might offend Hortensius (*Q. fr.* 1.3.8).

⁸ F. F. Abbott, in the comment in his excellent school edition, seems to be alone and in error when he wrote of "that consulship of mine, which Curio used in mockery to call an apotheosis." I take the passage to mean that Curio used to call Cicero's consulship an apotheosis seriously, but that he would not do so in June or July of 61.

⁹ R. S. Conway, "The Use of the Singular *Nos* in Cicero's Letters," *Trans. Cambridge Philol. Soc.* 5.1 (1899) 7-79, especially 22 (reviewed in *CR* 14. 138-40 by L. C. Purser); a briefer discussion by Conway, "The Inner Experience of Cicero," chap. 1 of *New Studies of a Great Inheritance* (London 1921).

¹⁰ W. Drumann-P. Groebe, *Gesch. Roms*² 5.512 f., 538-43. There is a full discussion, but with animadversions unfavorable to Cicero, in A. Alföldi, "Die Geburt der kaiserlichen Bildsymbolik: 2. Der neue Romulus; 3. Parens patriae," *MusHelv* 8 (1951) 190-215, 9 (1952) 204-43, 10 (1953) 103-24, 11 (1954) 133-69. T. Rice Holmes appears to be overtranslating when he writes, "... even my consulship, which Curio used to call the apotheosis of the office, will become a byword." (*The Roman Republic and the Founder of the Empire* [Oxford 1923] 1.300). I take it rather that the consulship of 63 constituted an apotheosis for Cicero personally.

caused Q. Catulus to call Cicero *parens patriae* on December 3, 63, and Cato to name Cicero *pater patriae* in *contiones* later.¹¹

L. Afranius was the person whose election would constitute such a shameful degradation of the great consulship (*si hic factus erit*). In 1951 (above, note 1) I explained the theatrical quality of the several jokes connected with L. Afranius and his campaign in *Att.* 1.16. Cicero indulged in these witticisms since he was bitterly amused that L. Afranius, Pompey's associate and a candidate for the consulship of 60, happened to have the same name as the comic poet of the preceding generation. In 1951 I was unable to offer an interpretation of *fabam mimum*, although I suggested (page 129) that there should be something theatrical in the phrase. The best I could do was to take it as probably an imaginary title and not the title of a real play.¹² The *istos consulatus non flocci faciteon* indicates that the *fabam mimum* must be something conspicuously valueless.

There are numerous and ingenious suggestions in Tyrrell and Purser's note on the passage and elsewhere,¹³ but they all seem either to look at the problem from a modern point of view or to search for something abstruse. I believe that the answer lies in a common theatrical object that would be generally familiar but that might not often be found in serious literature, even in informal letters.

The two scholars who have attacked the question most recently

¹¹ M. Gelzer, "M. Tullius Cicero (als Politiker)," *RE* 7A¹ (1939) 884; cf. Cic. *Fam.* 15.4.11.

¹² *Op. cit.* (above, note 1) 131 f.; Schanz-Hosius (above, note 6) 1.263 f. think it a real farce called *Faba*; E. Wüst speculates on its plot, "Mimos," *RE* 15 (1932) 1746, following Birt (see below, note 13). The analogy for an imaginary title could be with *Britannicus iureconsultus* as a character in an imaginary mime (Cic. *Fam.* 7.11.2), or with Augustus' deathbed query as to whether he had well acted the *mimus vitae* (Suet. *Aug.* 99.1).

¹³ In Tyrrell and Purser we find mention of such suggested readings as *Afranii mimum*, *fatuum mimum*, *fabae hilum*, *fabae midam*. K. Münscher, in a review article on Seneca in *JAW* 192 (1922) 149 f., gives the following bibliography relevant to our problem: (a) J. H. Schmalz in a review in *BerlPhilWoch* 36 (1916) 14 f. summarized the history of the discussion; (b) O. Rossbach in *BerlPhilWoch* 33 (1913) 1310 f. wished to read *Fabulam mimum*; (c) A. M. Harmon objected to Rossbach's reading in *BerlPhilWoch* 34 (1914) 702 f., and Rossbach vigorously replied on 703 f.; (d) Th. Birt in *BerlPhilWoch* 35 (1915) 669-72 discussed the nature of the subject of this Bean-Mime; (e) F. Krohn, *BerlPhilWoch* 36 (1916) 1015, wished to read *Fabarii minium*; (f) F. Münzer completely rejected Krohn's suggestion in *BerlPhilWoch* 36 (1916) 1316-20.

are Constans and Watt. Constans¹⁴ wished to alter the reading to *fabam imam*, citing as the basis of this idea the passage in Festus (page 363, 496 Lindsay): “‘Tam perit quam extrema faba’ in proverbio est, quod ea plerumque aut proteritur, aut decerpitur a praetereuntibus.” Moricca (Moricca-Caputo) in the *apparatus criticus* of the Paravia edition of the letters (Turin 1953) sensibly objected that there is a difference between *extrema* and *ima*,¹⁵ a difference that had troubled Constans too.

Watt’s procedure¹⁶ was to assume that the Senecan and Ciceronian passages are similar and, therefore, to look for a word which could have been corrupted into both *fabam* and *famam* and yet be a credible title for a mime and a contrast with deification. He very shrewdly decides that it was a play called *Phasma*, ‘The Ghost,’ which he prefers to ascribe to the mimograph Catullus.¹⁷ *Φάσμα* means that the consulship (Cicero’s) will, after Afranius’ election, be a ghost of what it once was.

I prefer to follow the principle of some of Watt’s predecessors in trying to cope with the text as it stands, with as little emendation as possible.

My argument begins with Horace, *Epist.* 1.7.22 f.:

Vir bonus et sapiens dignis ait esse paratus;
nec tamen ignorat, quid distent aera lupinis.

Even the school editions point out that by “lupines” is meant some sort of bean used as stage money, and some of them go on to mention *aurum comicum* and refer to Plautus’ *Poenulus*. I confess that I did not realize how important the reference was until I came across Plaut. *Poen.* 597–99 independently in my own reading. The editors should have quoted all three verses:

¹⁴ L.-A. Constans discussed this point twice but in more detail in the second reference: *REL* 6 (1928) 133; *RevPhil*, 3 sér., 2 (1928) 212 f.

¹⁵ Other bean proverbs, equally unprofitable, are to be found in A. Otto, *Die Sprichwörter und sprichwörtlichen Redensarten der Römer* (Leipzig 1890) 127 f., 223.

¹⁶ W. S. Watt, “Fabam mimum,” *Hermes* 83 (1955) 496–500.

¹⁷ Because it was not a mime, Watt pays little attention to the *Phasma* by Menander, of which we have fragments as well as the discussion of Luscius Lanuvinus’ translation of it in the prologue of Terence’s *Eunuchus* (9), and in Donatus’ comments on that prologue; cf. Schanz-Hosius (above, note 6) 1.124 f. Watt has to move back the dates of this Catullus in order to make him eligible. He is dated in the reign of Caligula by Schanz-Hosius (above, note 6) 2.564 f., 823, and his *Phasma* is mentioned in Juv. 8.185 f.

ADV. aurum est profecto hic, spectatores, comicum:
 macerato hoc pingues fiunt auro in barbaria boves;
 verum ad hanc rem agundam Philippum est: ita nos adsimulabimus.

Now we know that the seeds of these lupines were such that they would pass for gold Philippi.¹⁸ Were *fabae* similar? We are assured by A. C. Andrews¹⁹ that *faba* probably originally meant "a round seed, a spherical body," not necessarily of the appearance of the bean today. It should be noted that we are dealing with the field bean, the broad bean, *Faba vulgaris* (Moench), *Vicia Faba* (L.); not with *Phaseolus* (*Phaseolus*).

We know from Cato that *faba* and *lupinus* were used as cattle forage and fodder,²⁰ and there is a good passage in Cato (*De agri cult.* 54.3) that by its use of the word *macerati* proves that Plautus had lupine in mind. In connection with early spring feeding of cattle Cato prescribes: "Ubi verno dare coeperis, modium glandis aut vinaceorum dato aut modium lupini macerati et faeni P. XV."²¹

The final question is how botanical it is worth our while to be, whether it makes any difference that Cicero said *fabam* instead of *lupinum*.²² It may be noted that if he had written *lupinum*, there would have been no problem, for someone would have noted the Horace passage in this connection. I see no reason why Cicero

¹⁸ *Philippi* (*philippeii*) were the standard gold coins in use at Rome in much of the second century B.C.: Seltman, "Philippeioi," *RE* 19 (1938) 2196–8.

¹⁹ "The Bean and Indo-European Totemism," *American Anthropologist*, N.S. 51 (1949) 274–92; the quotation is on 284, cf. 288.

²⁰ *Faba*: Cato, *De agri cult.* 27; *lupinus*: *ibid.* 5.8 (presumably).

²¹ In *HN* 18.117 Pliny says that *faba* was good for man and beast (*maximus honos fabae*), and in 50 and 133 he makes much the same claim for lupine. In 18.136 Pliny wrote of the lupine: "Maceratum calida aqua homini quoque in cibo est. Nam bovem unum modii singuli satiant validumque praestant, quando etiam inpositum puerorum ventribus pro remedio est."

²² It may be observed that *faba* is commonly used in the singular: *ThLL* s.v. "Faba," vol. 6, especially column 2. Although they are interesting and furnish some false leads for our topic, there is really no help for us in the standard reference books: Forcellini s.v. "Faba" and s.v. "Lupinus"; *ThLL* s.v. "Faba" and related words, vol. 6 cols. 2–6, also s.v. "Fabulonia," col. 34, and s.v. "Fabulus," col. 38; Daremberg-Saglio: s.v. "Cibaria" (Fournier) 1.2.1144, s.v. "Faba" (F. Lenormant) 2.2.947, s.v. "Rustica res" (A. S. Dorigny) 4.2.921 (on lupine); Olck, "Bohne," *RE* 3 (1899) 609–22; Steier, "Lupine," *RE* 13 (1927) 1845–50, who thinks, with no proof beyond the passages in Horace and Plautus, that both lupines and beans were used as stage money; Regling, "Lupinus," *RE* 13 (1927) 1850, who mentions that the lupine served to designate a measure of weight, just as *LSJ* in their *Addenda et Corrigenda* 2.2085 note that *κύαμος* (i.e., bean) was used as the name of a small monetary unit.

may not have been misinformed or careless in his terminology, for here he was talking about the seed of a plant, not the plant as it would be seen as a growing crop or in a market. He may even have meant "the bean of the lupine," although this would be hard to prove. Perhaps he intended to add an "f" to a passage replete with "f's." We can hardly be too particular when there are in Latin literature only two references to lupines as stage money, in Horace and in Plautus, and when we need Cato to explain the Plautine passage.

Stage money seems to me to be the answer to the riddle, although for some reason Cicero used *faba* in place of the *lupini* which our scanty evidence indicates as the correct term.²³ It is theatrical like the rest of the allusions to Afranius and his candidature. It would be a common term but not common in literature. It would be colloquial like the *floci* (which also caused the scribes trouble), and it would be unusual enough to be in company with the unique *facteon*. It would indicate that Cicero's great consulship of 63 would be reduced to worthlessness (*fabam mimum*) if Afranius should be elected. And it also served to mislead us into thinking of beans when we should have been thinking of lupines.

It is tempting to accept the minor reading of *fabam nummum* or *faba numum*, but that is almost too attractive and probably no more than someone hazarding the same conjecture as mine. *Faba numum* occurs only in *H* (cod. Landianus in the Landi-Passerini Library at Piacenza, no. 8), while *fabam nummum* is in *s* (cod. Urbinas 322 in the Vatican Library) and is the reading accepted by the *editio Romana princeps* (Rome 1470), the second edition of Ascensius (Paris 1522), and in the text of the edition of Cratander (Basel 1528). Not especially convincing, and of questionable Latinity.

In dealing with jokes in letters it is well to recall what Cicero later said himself (*Phil.* 2.7): "Quam multa ioca solent esse in epistulis quae, prolata si sint, inepta videantur . . ." ²⁴

²³ The Oldfather-Canter-Abbott *Index* to the Correspondence gives this passage as the only occurrence of *faba*, while *lupinus* is not listed at all.

²⁴ Humor was a recognized portion of epistolary style: *Cic. Fam.* 2.4.1. If the reader wishes another leguminous joke, it is possible that in *Att.* 1.1.2, according to the commentary of Tyrrell and Purser, Cicero was punning on the name of Thermus which, transliterated into Greek, gives the word that means "a lupine," with further punning on the *cicer* part of his own name.

ADDENDUM

It has no doubt been observed that I have explained only the circumstances and the basis of the humor of *fabam mimum*, and that I have refrained from construing the phrase itself. By "stage money" I mean only the *fabam*, but I am also convinced that *fabam mimum* is the correct reading. The referee for this paper entered a just complaint because I did not discuss the grammar of the phrase.

The referee pondered the possibility, as I had, that *mimum* is perhaps to be taken as a genitive plural. I have also thought that one might alter *mimum* to *mimicam*, or that the original reading was *mimi*, corrupted to *mimum* by the subsequent *futurum*. Yet I hesitate to introduce a merely reasonable emendation into a passage full of novelties. Although it seems intolerable but not impossible to have two nouns in this juxtaposition, the probably unrelated *famam mimum* in Seneca, *Apocol.* 9.3 admonishes us to avoid haste in altering *mimum* in either passage.

I conclude that *mimum* in *Att.* 1.16.13 awaits elucidation rather than emendation, and that such an elucidation will confirm my explanation that stage money is the origin of the witticism. We cannot expect a rapid solution to so venerable a problem, but we are another step nearer to the solution.