



I

The Early Career of Marius

Politics is perhaps the only profession for which no preparation is thought necessary.

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894)

Introduction

The phrase which readily springs to mind as a suitable subtitle for a chapter devoted to the early career of Gaius Marius is 'legend or reality?'. Any facts which exist relating to the years prior to his election to the consulship in 108 are totally immersed in literary creations that are arguably the product of imaginative and masterful ancient writers. Marius was born about 157, and became consul just short of fifty years of age. For the greater part of his long life details are shadowy and beyond the grasp of today's researcher, a

problem which is, however, applicable even to the most famous of the Roman politicians of the Republic. Ancient writers, whether they were historians or biographers, when confronted with the difficult but unavoidable task of relating the backgrounds, family history and early lives of their subjects, were often obliged to invent stories or, at least, indulge in generalities,¹ because factual material was already inaccessible. Such useful and enlivening evidence was rarely, if ever, recorded. The result was very often fanciful myth, but it did allow a writer like Plutarch to arrive at some sort of balance in works which, naturally enough, dealt primarily with careers which were subsequent to the acquisition of senior magistracies.

Many Romans who became prominent in later life had rather obscure origins, but this is understandable, and this is not because they came from unknown families, but because all knowledge of this period of their lives was unavailable probably within a generation after they died. It is, therefore, hardly remarkable that the 'poor beginnings' of a politician's career became something of a literary *topos* since the 'rags to riches' theme was evidently also popular during antiquity. When faced with writing a life of Marius, Plutarch clearly encountered the all too familiar problem of 'where to begin' and with exactly what he was to fill his introductory sections before, no doubt much relieved, he could happily proceed to the more firmly documented achievements.

In a biography which extends to forty-six chapters (Teubner edition), Plutarch actually embarks on his account (*Mar.* 1.1-3) with a digression on Roman *cognomina*, the third *nomen* possessed by many of the more famous citizens of the *res publica*, but which, in Marius' case, was clearly lacking (Γαῖου Μαρίου τρίτον οὐκ ἔχομεν εἰπεῖν ὄνομα). This fact apparently struck the writer as a point sufficiently unusual to merit comment, and which could be elevated to a significant place in this biography, though an explanation of Roman nomenclature is perhaps a surprising topic with which to beguile an audience of the early second century AD, by which time the practice had become a regular convention throughout the empire.² Few educated persons living in the reign of Trajan, who presumably comprised the major part

¹ D. A. Russell, 'Plutarch's Life of Coriolanus', *JRS* 53 (1963) 22; C. B. R. Pelling, 'Childhood and Personality in Greek Biography', in *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature*, ed. C. B. R. Pelling, Oxford 1990, 213-244; in *Antonine Literature* 37-43.

² Note, for example, the inscription from Ephesus of one C. Vibius Salutaris, dated to between AD 104 and 110, during the same decade in which several of Plutarch's lives were published, G. M. Rogers, *The Sacred Identity of Ephesus: Foundation Myths of a Roman City*, London & New York 1991, 152-185, with several references to Ephesians with triple names. On the date of publication of the parallel lives see D. A. Russell 'On Reading Plutarch's Lives', *G&R* 13 (1966) 140; *Plutarch*, London 1972, 9-10. It is just conceivable that Plutarch considered this topic of interest to his immediate circle in and around Chaeronea, though Plutarch, himself a Roman citizen, possessed the *tria nomina*, D. A. Russell, *OCD*² 848-849; C. P. Jones, *Plutarch and Rome*, Oxford 1971, 11 n. 45; Russell, *Plutarch* 8.

of Plutarch's readership, can have required a lesson on the method of naming their fellow citizens at Rome or indeed their rulers. Moreover, Plutarch, by this late stage in his studies of great Romans, was surely aware that an account of missing *cognomina* was not that sensational.³ He notes just two other republican politicians – Q. Sertorius and L. Mummius – who did not have a third name, though the following list of *consulares* from the third century down to Caesar shows how unremarkable the phenomenon really was:

C. Flaminius (cos. 223)	C. Marius (cos. I 107)
C. Servilius [Geminus] (cos. 203)	M'. Aquillius M'.f. (cos. 101)
C. Laelius (cos. 190)	M. Antonius (cos. 99)
C. Flaminius C.f. (cos. 187)	T. Didius (cos. 98)
Cn. Octavius (cos. 165)	M. Herennius (cos. 93)
Q. Opimius (cos. 154)	M. Perperna M.f. (cos. 92)
M'. Manilius (cos. 149)	Cn. Octavius (cos. 87)
L. Mummius (cos. 146)	C. Norbanus (cos. 83)
Q. Pompeius (cos. 141)	C. Marius C.f. (cos. 82)
C. Laelius C.f. (cos. 140)	Cn. Octavius (cos. 76)
P. Rupilius (cos. 132)	L. Octavius (cos. 75)
M. Perperna (cos. 130)	Q. Hortensius (cos. 69)
M'. Aquillius (cos. 129)	C. Antonius M.f. (cos. 63)
Cn. Octavius (cos. 128)	L. Afranius (cos. 60)
C. Fannius (cos. 122)	A. Gabinius (cos. 58)
L. Opimius Q.f. (cos. 121)	P. Vatinius (cos. 47)
P. Manilius (cos. 120)	C. Trebonius (cos. 45)
Q.? Hortensius (cos. des. 108)	M. Antonius (cos. 44)

The absence of a *cognomen* was a fairly common feature among the plebeian families active in public life, and was perhaps a distinction which was deliberately cultivated by some politicians in order to emphasize the difference between themselves and other more established senatorial families.⁴ C. Marius was, therefore, not exceptional, which makes Plutarch's introduction look rather weak and somewhat contrived, and is indicative of the paucity of evidence with which he was faced when he began his work.⁵

³ On the use of *cognomina* as digressions by Plutarch see Russell, 1963: 21. The life of Marius was among the last of the biographies to be composed and hence circulated not before 110.

⁴ There was hardly a hard and fast rule since plebeian families with *cognomina* easily outnumbered those without and, as often as not, *novi homines* also possessed the third name: M. Porcius Cato (cos. 195), Cn. Mallius Maximus (cos. 105), C. Flavius Fimbria (cos. 104), C. Coelius Caldus (cos. 94). Numerous examples of senators in the lesser offices may also be cited here.

⁵ Plutarch was not unique in beginning a biography with apparently extraneous material. Suetonius, in his life of Caligula, barely mentions his subject until Chapter 8, the first seven sections being a biographical study in miniature of his father Germanicus Caesar. Furthermore, the inclusion of superfluous material possibly contributed to the loss of the introductory sections of Suetonius' life of Caesar.

After he has endeavoured to stress a degree of dissimilarity between Marius and his contemporaries, Plutarch continues with a discussion about his subject's appearance, which he claims to have viewed for himself at Ravenna (*Mar.* 2.1).⁶ The physical attributes of a politician also appear regularly in ancient biographies, although it is doubtful whether a lone statue, erected long afterwards, actually provided a fair likeness, or could be used as the basis of a fair and accurate description.⁷ Moreover, Plutarch is vague and dwells mainly on some intangible male spiritual force. When this is compared with his rather more acute observations about Sulla, Pompey and Caesar,⁸ it suggests that his memory, which was excellent in some respects, was far from perfect regarding this monument.

ἀνδρώδης γὰρ φύσει καὶ πολεμικὸς γενόμενος, καὶ στρατιωτικῆς μᾶλλον ἢ πολιτικῆς παιδείας μεταλαβών, ἄκρατον ἐν ταῖς ἐξουσίαις τὸν θυμὸν ἔσχε.

He was naturally masculine and fond of war and, because he had been trained in military affairs rather than in civic matters, his temper was fierce when he exercised authority.⁹

This statement, without any mention of physical traits – eyes, nose, ears, teeth, mouth, chin – may not have offended an ancient audience, but its use to a historian is minimal because it provides so little useful information. However, in this passage Plutarch is, in effect, claiming that, because Marius had all the inherent qualities and defects of a soldier and general, and possessed none of those more subtle arts of a politician and administrator, his political career must have been doomed to ultimate failure from the beginning. In particular, Plutarch's comment regarding Marius' intemperate moods,¹⁰ though largely irrelevant and having nothing to do with *virtus*, partly excuses his subject's supposed inability to come to grips with the complexities of Roman political life.

It is therefore hardly a surprise that Plutarch should also affirm (*Mar.* 2.2) that Marius neither studied Greek literature nor spoke Greek on any important state occasion. His subject was, after all, a bluff military type who

⁶ Plutarch knew Rome and, in the company of his patron L. Mestrius Florus, had travelled around northern Italy in particular to Bedriacum and Brixellum, both of which were sites associated with the civil war of 69, *Otho* 14.2, 18.2; Jones, *Plutarch and Rome* 21–22; Russell, *Plutarch* 7–8.

⁷ Note also Appian's comment, *BC.* 1.97, concerning the equestrian statue of Sulla erected at Rome after the battle of the Colline Gate; Crawford, *RRC* 1.397, no. 381, for a portrayal on the coinage.

⁸ *Plut. Sull.* 2.1; *Pomp.* 2.1–2; *Caes.* 4. However, the biographies of Crassus, Cicero, Brutus and Antony do not contain such material.

⁹ The translations provided in this work are adapted from those found in the *Loeb Classical Library* editions.

¹⁰ A thoroughly bad temper was clearly a well-remembered characteristic of this politician, *Cic. Tusc.* 5.56; *Phil.* 11.1. This representation of Marius was evidently to be Plutarch's basic characterization, Russell, 1966: 145: 'Marius was a hard man from the outset, and became more so ...'.

would surely have had neither the time for a proper education nor the inclination to pursue an interest in literature, especially that of people subjected to Roman rule.¹¹ However, the older views about Marius' education or lack of education may be entirely set aside.¹² It is quite apparent that, owing to a lack of more apposite material, Plutarch fell back on his own considerable literary flair and, in the process, contributed to the development of the 'tough-old-military-man-legend', in which a whole career was affected by the absence of a civilizing – Greek – element. The evidence is unreliable and misleading since it is hardly credible that any Roman by the end of the second century could have pursued a public career in total, even partial, ignorance of the Mediterranean's second language. That does not mean to say that every senator had a profound knowledge of the works of all Greek writers, but all had sufficient awareness of the language for it not to be completely beyond their comprehension. The affairs of Greece and the Hellenistic East in the second century were too significant to prevent the advent of full bilingualism amongst the governing senatorial oligarchy at Rome.¹³ If Plutarch's portrayal of Marius as a 'rough diamond' is not his own, it emanates from a possibly hostile source, which also tried to highlight a difference between Marius and his apparently more sophisticated and better educated fellows in Rome, perhaps after they are said to have come into conflict after his rise to eminence (Sall. *Iug.* 63.3). Carney rightly warns against the influence of ancient propaganda, and draws attention to this topical element, which Plutarch introduces after his character study of Marius.¹⁴

Obscurity of birth and rustic upbringing were again favourite *topoi* among ancient writers, but the use of such material mainly reflects a situation in which it was impossible to recover much about the status of a subject's

¹¹ N. Horsfall, 'Doctus sermones utriusque linguae', *EMC* 22 (1979) 86.

¹² Note, for instance, M. L. Clarke, *Rhetoric at Rome*, London 1953, 12: 'Marius was notoriously lacking in Greek culture'; A. O. Gwynn, *Roman Education from Cicero to Quintilian*, Oxford 1926, 59–60: 'Marius himself was almost wholly uneducated. He ... had gone straight into the army at an age when Cicero was only beginning his studies.' This assertion is quite incorrect, of course, because Cicero had served under Sulla and Cn. Pompeius Strabo in 89 aged seventeen, T. N. Mitchell, *Cicero: The Ascending Years*, London 1979, 8–9. Note also E. Valgiglio, *Plutarco: Vita di Mario*, Florence 1956, 8–10, regarding Marius' education. Although modern opinion generally favours Marius' late entry into the army, see below.

¹³ Carney, *Marius* 10; J. Kaimio, *The Romans and the Greek Language*, Helsinki 1979, 95, who disbelieves the evidence of Valerius Maximus (2.2.2) that Greek was translated by interpreters in the senate even at the beginning of the first century. Cf. Horsfall, 1979: 87, who considers that, while some republican politicians will have been fluent in Greek, the average Roman senator 'had a Greek quotation ready for any occasion.'

¹⁴ Carney, *Marius* 9: 'Marius is often represented in the sources as a raw, uneducated soldier, an interpretation partly due to partisan contemporary writers, partly springing from adaptation to the Procrustean bed of the soldier-type in imperial rhetoric.' For Livy as the possible source for the early period of Marius' life, see N.I. Barbu, *Les procédés de la peinture des caractères et la vérité historique dans les biographies de Plutarque*, Paris 1933, 80–81.

family: Γενόμενος δὲ γονέων παντάπασιν ἀδόξων ... ('Born of quite humble parents ...', Plut. *Mar.* 3.1).¹⁵ Marius' background was unknown because he did not have senatorial antecedents in Rome, and hence there was no public record, particularly from epigraphic sources, for a writer to consult at first hand. Nevertheless, it should also be remembered that in normal practice there were few documents available even for descendants of the most prestigious senatorial families. The problem of finding something worthwhile and entertaining to say about Marius' family was further compounded because he belonged to the municipal aristocracy of a town which had received the full citizenship not long before his birth.¹⁶ Nevertheless, had the evidence been obtainable in the first place, Plutarch, at the beginning of the second century AD, ought not to have encountered too many problems. However, unless anecdotes had been preserved by a contemporary writer, by the subject or his family, it was a wellnigh fruitless exercise to try to unearth facts about any man's childhood and ancestors, especially if there was no history of participation in public life.

Politicians from families whose private affairs had for long been in the public domain seldom took the trouble to make elaborate archives of their famous deeds. A man from a family of no previous special distinction had even less incentive to commit petty triumphs to permanent record, at least in this period. Roman society of the second century was a good deal less urbane when measured, in terms of its family propaganda, against the late Republic and early Principate. The consequence was that true research for a history or biography simply became unprofitable, and compensation was made for this deficiency through invention. The romantic notion that Marius' family was poor and that the elder Marius was little more than a farm labourer (Plut. *Mar.* 3.1) thus probably owe their origins to Plutarch rather than

¹⁵ Marius' mother was Fulcinia, a name not entirely unknown at Rome. Thus C. Fulcinus, leg. 438, L. Fulcinus quaestor in either 148 or 167, *MRR* 2.567, 3.94. Marius may, therefore, have been related through the maternal line to a Roman senatorial family. Marii were probably also present in the senate in the earlier part of the second century, and were conceivably related to the Marii of Arpinum. Thus Q. Marius, mon. 189-180, Crawford, *RRC* 1.218-219, no. 148; *MRR* 2.445, 3.140, who won public office precisely during the same decade that Arpinum acquired full Roman citizenship. Compare the discussion of Plutarch and Sallust concerning Sulla's background and ancestors, though it is plain from Livy, 39.6.2, 8.2, and from the numismatic evidence, Crawford, *RRC* 1.249, no. 205: 'P.SVLA', mon. ca. 151, and *RRC* 1.250 for a stemma of the Corneliae Sullae, that the family was neither decayed nor disreputable in the second century. For Marius' mother see also E. Badian, 'Lucius Sulla: The Deadly Reformer', in *Essays on Roman Culture: The Todd Memorial Lectures*, ed. A.J. Dunston, Toronto & Sarasota 1976, 66 n. 11: 'The mothers of Marius and Cicero, perhaps surprisingly, are mentioned. There, presumably, lack of distinction was the essence of the biography.'

¹⁶ Liv. 38.36.7; A. N. Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship*, Oxford 1973², 61, 168, 210-211; L. R. Taylor, *The Voting Districts of the Roman Republic: The Thirty-Five Urban and Rural Tribes, Papers and Monographs of the American Academy in Rome* 20, Rome 1960, 155, 272. In 188 the citizens of Arpinum were enrolled in the voting tribe *Cornelia*. For Marius' equestrian origins, see Vell. 2.11.1; Badian, *FC* 194-195; *DUI* 142.

a reliable early source. And such unwarranted assertions may be dismissed because a young man who became intent on pursuing a political career had to have had disposable income in considerable quantity, not only because the *honores* were unpaid, but because the electoral campaigns for magistracies at Rome were a costly undertaking for any individual.

The idea that a *novus homo* in republican politics must have come from a relatively poor family background is one that may have originated in antiquity, and has continued to have been viewed favourably up to quite recent times.¹⁷ However, no would-be politician could hope to win public offices without a substantial personal fortune. This need not have been entirely in the form of coined money, but rather in the possession of landed estates, great enough to be used as collateral against loans with which to finance the electoral competitions for the regular magistracies. Large numbers of previously non-senatorial families produced politicians who achieved curule office from the time of the Second Punic War, which indicates that the acquisition of an empire increased the prosperity not just of the senatorial families, but also of those who qualified for the equestrian census. These families now enjoyed the capital with which their members could aspire to become magistrates in Rome and, from the second century, aristocrats from *municipia* could also look forward to being represented in the senate. All *novi homines* who embarked on a political career were wealthy men, and could expect to achieve some measure of success in the various polls.

Indeed, so numerous are the examples of successful newcomers to political life that, by the latter half of the second century, even a *novus homo* need have had few qualms about aspiring to the higher magistracies. Men with ambition such as Marius were not obliged to remain outside political life nor, once they won a minor office, were they destined to be confined to lowly positions merely because their families were not established entities in Roman society. When recognition is duly given to the number of politicians who obtained prominent places in the senatorial order in the hundred years before Marius' tribunate, having won offices which were not formerly held in historical times by their ancestors, the influx into the praetorship and consulship both by newcomers and by *novi homines* can be shown to be appreciable.¹⁸

¹⁷ In textbooks still used widely in the teaching of Roman history, note, for example, F. B. Marsh, *A History of the Roman World from 146–30 B.C.*, London & New York 1963³, 77, though this theme is admittedly less apparent in newer editions and publications.

¹⁸ The term *novus homo* in the sense proposed by Gelzer, *The Roman Nobility* 50–52; cf. H. Strasburger, *RE* 17,1 (1936) 1223–1228, has been rejected here for the less restrictive definition propounded by, for example, P. A. Brunt, 'Nobilitas and Novitas', *JRS* 72 (1982) 1–17: 'The decay or extinction of old noble families made way for new. Evidently distinction of birth was not enough to maintain political eminence'; K. Hopkins & G. Burton, 'Political Succession in the Late Republic (249–50 BC)', in *Death and Renewal*, Cambridge 1983, 117:

- C. Flaminius (cos. II 217)
 C. Terentius Varro (cos. 216)
 C. Calpurnius Piso (pr. 211)
 C. Aurunculeius (pr. 209)
 A. Hostilius Cato (pr. 207)
 C. Mamilius Atellus (pr. 207)
 P. Licinius Crassus (cos. 205)
 Cn. Tremellius Flaccus (pr. 202)
 L. Villius Tappulus (pr. 199)
 M. Helvius (pr. 197)
 C. Atinius Labeo (pr. 195)
 T. Iuuentius Thalna (pr. 194)
 C. Scribonius Curio (pr. 193)
 C. Laelius (cos. 190)
 L. Baebius Dives (pr. 189)
 C. Stertinius (pr. 188)
 L. Terentius Massiliota (pr. 187)
 C. Afranius Stellio (pr. 185)
 Cn. Baebius Tamphilus (cos. 182)
 M. Baebius Tamphilus (cos. 181)
 C. Cluvius Saxula (pr. 178)
 C. Numisius (pr. 177)
 Q. Petillius Spurius (cos. 176)
 L. Aquillius Gallus (pr. 176)
 C. Matienus (pr. 173)
 C. Memmius (pr. 172)
 L. Villius Annalis (pr. 171)
 M. Raecius (pr. 170)
 P. Fonteius Balbus (pr. 168)
 P. Rutilius Calvus (pr. 166)
 A. Licinius Nerva (pr. 166)
 L. Anicius Gallus (cos. 160)
 Q. Opimius (cos. 154)
 M'. Manilius (cos. 149)
 C. Atilius Serranus (pr. 218)
 Q. Mucius Scaevola (pr. 215)
 C. Hostilius Tubulus (pr. 209)
 L. Porcius Licinus (pr. 207)
 C. Hostilius Cato (pr. 207)
 Cn. Octavius (pr. 205)
 L. Scribonius Libo (pr. 204)
 P. Villius Tappulus (cos. 199)
 C. Helvius (pr. 199)
 M. Porcius Cato (cos. 195)
 Sex. Digitius (pr. 195)
 Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus (cos. 194)
 M'. Acilius Glabrio (cos. 191)
 M. Tuccius (pr. 190)
 C. Atinius (pr. 188)
 C. Terentius Culleo (pr. 187)
 C. Aurelius Scaurus (pr. 186)
 Q. Naevius Matho (pr. 184)
 C. Terentius Istra (pr. 182)
 L. Duronius (pr. 181)
 T. Fonteius Capito (pr. 178)
 L. Mummius (pr. 177)
 M. Aburius (pr. 176)
 C. Cicereius (pr. 173)
 Sp. Cluvius (pr. 172)
 C. Caninius Rebilus (pr. 171)
 A. Hostilius Mancinus (cos. 170)
 C. Decimius (pr. 169)
 C. Licinius Nerva (pr. 167)
 M. Fonteius (pr. 166)
 C. Fannius Strabo (cos. 161)
 L. Aurelius Orestes (cos. 157)
 T. Annius Luscus (cos. 153)
 C. Vetilius (pr. 147?)

'... the senatorial aristocracy was the political arm, first of the Roman and then later of the Italian ruling classes. It never developed into a hereditary Estate. The oligarchic structure of government was stable, yet sufficiently flexible to allow a gradual but continuous turnover in the membership of the senate'; Millar, 1986: 2: 'On some points, such as the definition of *nobilitas*, it (Gelzer's *Die römische Nobilität*) is misleading ...'; P. J. J. Vanderbroeck, 'Homo Novus Again', *Chiron* 16 (1986) 239-242: '*Homo novus* was a vague concept ... persons of senatorial ancestry who became the first praetor or consul of their family ... the first member of a family to enter the senate through an elective magistracy ... the first of their family not only to enter the senate, but also to reach the consulate: the quintessential new men.' Note also n. 15 with references to O'Brien Moore, *RE Suppl.* 6 (1935) *senatus*, 697; R. J. A. Talbert, *The Senate of Imperial Rome*, Princeton 1984, 14, 20-21, 526; Cf. L. A. Burkhardt, 'The Political Elite of the Roman Republic: Comments on Recent Discussion of the Concepts *Nobilitas* and *Homo Novus*', *Historia* 39 (1990) 77-99: 'The attempts to revise this widely established picture of political power and to paint a new one do not find enough conclusive arguments', but who has to admit, 82-84, that Gelzer's definition of *novus homo* is deficient and was too narrow. This vexing problem still produces conflicting passions; and a consensus on the issue is still, quite clearly, far from evident.

C. Nigidius (pr. 145?)
 M. Cosconius (pr. 135?)
 M. Perperna (cos. 130)¹⁹

Q. Pompeius (cos. 141)
 P. Rupilius (cos. 132)

Marius was eventually to pursue a spectacular career, but the foundation for his success nonpareil had, demonstrably, been laid long before he ever sought his first public position.

Pre-Senatorial Career

During the period following the Second Punic War, a Roman who aspired to becoming a political figure, whether he was from the city or from a *municipium*, could not simply present himself to the electorate whenever he chose. A number of preliminary stages are evident, as is made clear by Polybius (6.19.1-5; cf. Liv. 27.11.14), who states that anyone desiring a political office had first to serve ten years in the army.²⁰ Only after the completion of this strict requirement did young men become eligible for magisterial offices. By the close of the second century, this ruling was probably no longer enforced, certainly not by law, though most young men still served in the army for a considerable length of time. Military service usually began at the age of seventeen which, in the period before Sulla's dictatorship, meant that the quaestorship, the most junior of the regular magistracies, could not be held before the age of twenty-six. However, since the quaestorship was not a prerequisite for the praetorship or the consulship prior to the *leges Corneliae* of 81 (App. BC. 1.100) it is therefore incorrect to interpret Polybius' evidence as being applicable to any office below curule status.²¹ The lesser positions available to an aspiring politician, including the quaestorship, were clearly governed by rather ambiguous rules in this period. Membership of the commissions within the vigintivirate was thus obviously held both by young men who had yet to finish their stint in the armed forces and by

¹⁹ Had the history of Livy, which preserves the names of the annual magistrates, survived beyond 166, there is no doubt that the trend apparent in the backgrounds of senators would continue to be well illustrated. What cannot be established, owing to the shortcomings of the third century sources, is whether any of the politicians named here had ancestors in the senate. It seems likely that most did not. See also Appendix 2 for a discussion of less familiar senators at the end of the second century.

²⁰ J. Suolahti, *Junior Officers in the Roman Army*, Helsinki 1955, 52-53: '... this stipulation was not, however, of an early date but is perhaps to be connected with the *lex Villia annalis* of the year 180 ...'; D. C. Earl, 'Appian B.C. 1, 14 and *Professio*', *Historia* 14 (1965) 331: '... the anomalous position of tribune of the plebs ... never subjected to the restrictions and regulations imposed on the magistracies proper. ... it demanded no qualification of age or previous office; we do not even know that the preliminary ten year's military service necessary for candidature for the regular magistracies applied to it.' See also Appendix 1.

²¹ See the conclusions of Appendix 1 and references.

politicians who already had the age requirement for curule offices.²²

As Marius came from a family which must have been registered among the equestrian order, following Polybius' evidence, he would have begun his service in the army as a recruit in a cavalry unit. Whatever the origin of a young man, he did not enter an officer corps immediately, however, though, given the relatively limited number of cavalrymen, his place in the *equites* marked him out for possible future leadership.²³ Marius, no doubt, served alongside numerous other youngsters from wealthy Roman and municipal families and, says Plutarch (*Mar.* 3.2), first saw action against the Numantines under the command of P. Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus in 134. Plutarch's evidence cannot be verified, but looks questionable, for Marius would already have been about twenty-three years of age by the time he reached Spain, six or seven years older than was normal for a boy from a well-to-do family. It is therefore not unlikely that Plutarch made his Marius enter the army late in order to maintain the disparity between his subject and his peers. It is more plausible to suggest that Marius had begun his military service as early as 141 or 140 when Q. Pompeius (cos. 141), another *novus homo*, led the Numantine campaign and had been defeated (*Liv. Per.* 54; *Oxy. Per.* 54; *App. Ib.* 76–78).²⁴ Indeed, Plutarch himself hints (*Mar.* 3.2) that Marius was actually already present in the army before Scipio Aemilianus arrived and responded enthusiastically to the introduction of stricter discipline:

τὸν στρατηγὸν οὐκ ἐλάνθανεν ἀνδρεία τῶν ἄλλων νέων διαφέρων καὶ τὴν μεταβολὴν τῆς διαίτης, ἦν ὑπὸ τρυφῆς καὶ πολυτελείας διεφθαρμένοι ἐπήγγε τοῖς στρατεύμασιν ὁ Σκηπίων, εὐκολώτατα προσδεχόμενος.

He attracted the attention of his (new?) general by excelling the other young men in bravery, and by his cheerful acceptance of the changed régime which Scipio introduced into the army when it had been spoiled by luxury and extravagance.

After he reached Spain, Scipio Aemilianus spent nearly a year restoring order and dignity to a dispirited army (*Plut. Reg. et Imp. Apothegm.* 201B), which had campaigned unsuccessfully for several years. Plutarch's account

²² The *Illviri monetales*, for instance, could be *adulescentes* as surely were Sex. Pompeius, mon. ca. 137, pr. 119, Crawford, *RRC* 1.267, no. 235; Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus, mon. 116 or 115, cos. 96, Crawford, *RRC* 1.300, no. 285; L. Marcius Philippus, mon. 113/112, cos. 91, Crawford, *RRC* 1.307, no. 293; L. Piso L.f. L.n. Frugi, mon. 90, pr. 74, Crawford, *RRC* 1.340, no. 340. However, other moneyers – see Appendix 1 – were obviously much older, which indicates that, in terms of age, a great deal of leeway was allowed for candidates to this office.

²³ Thus note the presence of *adulescentes* such as L. Sergius Catilina, L. Minucius, Ti. Veturius and L. Otacilius in the *consilium* of Cn. Pompeius Strabo (cos. 89), C. Cichorius, *Römische Studien*, Berlin 1922, 131; H.B. Mattingly, 'The *Consilium* of Cn. Pompeius Strabo in 89 B.C.' *Athenaeum* 53 (1975) 262–265. These were young men from senatorial or equestrian families serving in the cavalry, but they were already associated in the command structure of the army.

²⁴ For Pompeius' conduct of the war and his subsequent trial see *MRR* 1.477; Astin, *Scipio Aemilianus* 123–128; Gruen, *RPCC* 35.

(*Mar.* 3.2) cannot be employed to infer that Marius accompanied Scipio from Rome as a member of his *consilium*, but suggests instead that he was already present at Numantia.²⁵ His experience and zealous support of the new commander would explain his promotion and his presence in Scipio's company not as a raw recruit, but as a veteran who had deservedly won military laurels. Thus the story of Scipio's commendation of Marius (*Plut. Mar.* 3.3) may simply be a *topos*, which is found elsewhere, but possibly preserves a memory of sterling deeds by the young Arpinate.²⁶ A prolonged posting in Spain would account for, and solve, the problem of an apparent hiatus so early in Marius' career. All the ancient sources assert that he had no interest in the sort of education which later became vital for young and aspiring politicians. However, it is almost inconceivable that a youth from an influential and prominent family, even if only from a town such as Arpinum, would have wasted six or seven years in unemployment at a time when such local notables surely hoped that their offspring would bring them greater fame and glory in local and indeed in national affairs.

There is, of course, the question of municipal office for which Valerius Maximus (9.6.14) claims Marius received a *repulsa* in an election, though he seems to assign this event to the late 120s. During the Principate, for which the epigraphic evidence is far more abundant, it is clear that young men held local magistracies often shortly after receiving their *toga virilis*,²⁷ and this may also hold good for the republican period. This situation might go some way to filling up some of Marius' 'missing years', but not all since junior elective offices in *municipia*, as in Rome, were limited to a tenure of twelve months. Still, Marius may have acquired a familiarity with civic affairs at a very early stage, and was under the age assumed for men who, for instance, held the moneyership in Rome.²⁸ Moreover, although Valerius Maximus claims that Marius left Arpinum after a failure to win public office

²⁵ Cf. Carney, *Marius* 15, who maintains that Marius was in Scipio's entourage; *MRR* 1.492 n. 3; C. Cichorius, *Untersuchungen zu Lucilius*, Berlin 1908, 14, 24; *MRR* 3.139; Valgiglio, *Vita* 14–16. However, note E. Badian, 'Review of T. Robert S. Broughton, *Supplement to the Magistrates of the Roman Republic*', *Gnomon* 33 (1961) 496; *DUIJ* 144 and n. 6: 'Plutarch, rather interestingly, calls Marius a "youth" (*meirakion*) at this stage – clearly judging from the fact that he was doing his first military service.' Sallust thought that Marius was a youth when he entered the army, *Iug* 63.3: 'ubi primum aetas militiae patiens fuit, stipendiis faciundis', supports the argument presented here. On the other hand, Plutarch has surely conflated the chronology, perhaps following a source such as Livy.

²⁶ Also note Val. Max., 8.15.7, for another version of this tale, and compare with Scipio's advice to the young Jugurtha, also at Numantia, *Sall. Iug.* 8.2.

²⁷ M. Kleijwegt, *Ancient Youth: The Ambiguity of Youth and the Absence of Adolescence in Greco-Roman Society*, Amsterdam 1991, 318–319, 325, 333–334.

²⁸ On the ages of moneyers see T. F. Carney, 'Coins Bearing on the Age and Career of Marius', *NC* 19 (1959) 87; T. P. Wiseman, *New Men in the Roman Senate, 139 B.C. – A.D. 14*, Oxford 1971, 148, 204; H. B. Mattingly, 'The Management of the Roman Mint', *Istituto Italiano di Numismatica, Annali* 29 (1982) 12, 15, 17. On the ages of provincial senators in the first century see Hopkins & Burton, *Death and Renewal* 47 n. 24.

and came to Rome to campaign for the quaestorship ('Arpinatibus honoribus iudicatus inferior quaesturam Romae petere ausus est'), his account, which is of dubious reliability, may easily have telescoped events which had occurred over a longer period of time. Marius could have held municipal office in a number of different years both before and after his military service before he finally decided to look beyond the confines of Arpinum and embark on a political career in Rome. There is undoubtedly sufficient space in his career to allow for this assumption.

As far as Marius' military tribunate is concerned, most authorities prefer a date in the late 120s, but this supposition is based firstly on the evidence of Valerius Maximus (6.9.14) who gives only a brief résumé of his career, and secondly on the belief that he must have come to Numantia only in 134.²⁹ Had his military service started in or soon after 141 then, as Badian suggests,³⁰ a military tribunate as early as 129 or 130 is equally plausible. In fact, Sallust seems to imply an early election to this position (*Iug.* 63.4):

Ergo ubi primum tribunatum militarem a populo petit, plerisque faciem eius ignorantibus, factis notus per omnis tribus declaratur.

When he first sought the military tribunate elected by the people, most were, therefore, ignorant of his appearance, but his deeds were, however, well known, and as a result he was elected by a vote of all the tribes.

Although it is possible that his election as *tribunus militum* took place some years after his military service, after a lengthy sojourn at Arpinum out of sight of the Roman electorate, or followed a term spent in the army during the 120s, it is surely more likely that he campaigned for this post on his return from Spain. Had he returned with Scipio Aemilianus in 132 or shortly afterwards, in 131, when his accomplishments in that war were fresh in the minds of the citizen body, his own fame would have propelled him into office after a decade away from Italy and Rome, as Sallust implies. This would account for the statement that his face may have been unfamiliar but his glory had gone before him. His military tribunate should consequently be redated to 130 or 129 at the latest, and his reason for desiring a further posting overseas was to join the forthcoming expedition against Aristonicus in Pergamum.³¹ He may well have served in the army of P. Licinius Crassus Mucianus (cos. 131) or under his successor, M. Perperna (cos. 130),

²⁹ MRR 3.139; Carney, *Marius* 16–17; cf. Suolahti, *Junior Officers*, 312, 405, for a date close to 119.

³⁰ Badian, *DUIJ* 144; *Gnomon* 33 (1961) 496, who advances the idea that Marius served under M'. Aquillius (cos. 129) in Asia; MRR 3.139. To suggest that Marius was military tribune in 129 because he was later consul with M'. Aquillius M'.f., however, ignores the attraction of a date immediately after the termination of the Numantine expedition. Cf. E. Gabba, 'Mario e Silla', *ANRW* 1.1 (1972) 770, who believes Marius' military tribunate should be assigned to 123.

³¹ On Marius' acquaintance with the *Magna Mater* during the campaign to overcome Aristonicus see Badian, *DUIJ* 144; *Gnomon* 33 (1961) 496.

and, taking Sallust's evidence into consideration, the interval between the Numantine war and Marius' military tribunate should be regarded as being as brief as possible.³² There is absolutely no reason why Marius should have waited another ten years before canvassing for a military tribunate, and the information provided by the more extensive of the ancient sources seems to support this view. Indeed, it would have been logical for Marius to capitalize on the honours he had won under Scipio Aemilianus, who may also have been sympathetic towards his aims, which Plutarch (*Mar.* 3.3-4.1), in particular, again implies. Military service in Asia Minor brought more experience and a higher place in the command hierarchy, which would have been a useful addition to his *curriculum vitae* before seeking a purely civilian office.

The real interruption in Marius' career, therefore, occupies not a period early in his life, but the time between his late twenties and early thirties, from about 129 or 128 through to 121, though should this seemingly long interval be seen as at all abnormal? Numerous republican politicians who later appear in the magistracies have equally long spells of apparent inactivity,³³ and none of these are assigned professions unbecoming to a senator.

Sex. Iulius Caesar (cos. 157): trib. mil. 181, leg. 170, aed. 165

L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi (cos. 133): trib. 149, pr. 138(?)

P. Licinius Crassus Mucianus (cos. 131): q. 151(?), pr. 134(?)

C. Fannius (cos. 122): trib. mil. 141, pr. 127(?)

M. Iunius Silanus (cos. 109): trib. 124/123, pr. 116(?)

C. Marius (cos. I 107): trib. mil. 131/130, trib. 119

L. Marcius Philippus (cos. 91): trib. 104(?), pr. 96(?)

C. Norbanus (cos. 83): trib. 103, q. 102/99, pr. 87

To try to account for Marius' absence from public life in terms of failure, or solely in terms of a lowly but financially beneficial activity such as tax-farming simply because he was a *novus homo*, is to be entrapped by the legend which has been constructed about his personality. It makes much more sense, given the real status of his background, to allow Marius, having first ended his military service, having made a name for himself in the process, and having been elected *tribunus militum*, the satisfaction of pausing to consolidate his position and financial resources. After so long an absence from home, it would have been quite natural for him to devote his time to re-establishing useful local connections before attempting to win one of the

³² On the campaigns of Mucianus and Perpenna see *MRR* 1.500-502. Carney, *Marius* 17 supposes, however, that, since Marius must have been a client of the Caecilii Metelli, he should be placed in the army of Q. Caecilius Metellus Balaricus (cos. 123) between 123 and 122, *MRR* 1.513. There is no evidence to support this opinion.

³³ For praetors who experienced lengthy delays before they won the consulship see R. J. Evans, 'Consuls with a Delay between the Praetorship and the Consulship', *AHB* 4 (1990) 65-71.

more impressive and expensive offices in Rome. Moreover, he may well have had to fulfil obligations in Arpinum and, like most men from influential families, have had business interests which drew him away from public life temporarily.³⁴ While there is no exact ancient evidence for the suggestion that Marius was formally engaged as a *publicanus* during this decade, time spent under arms in Asia Minor during the very years in which Pergamum was converted into a *provincia* might have opened up possibilities in this quarter, and later proved a profitable method of enlarging his already not inconsiderable assets.³⁵

By the time he campaigned, albeit unsuccessfully, for the aedileship, he was plainly in the possession of a vast personal fortune. It would have been impossible for him to entertain the idea of canvassing for the two aedileships in the same year and the praetorship in the next unless he had ready and very substantial funds at his disposal. Diodorus (34/5.38.1) and Velleius Paterculus (2.11.2) note that Marius had contacts among the business community, but this evidence surely demonstrates the diversity which characterized all senatorial wealth rather than an intention to highlight the limits, that is tax-gathering, of a single politician.³⁶ Shatzman's view that: 'Marius began his career with comparatively little means; he became one of the richest men in Rome (Plut. *Mar.* 34.4). His enrichment began when he was engaged in *publica*, yet it was due mainly to his military commands',³⁷ may contain a grain of truth, but it is far more credible that Marius began his career a wealthy man and, through his various connections and triumphs, greatly increased his capital.

Had Marius decided to embark on a political career after he finished his military service, he would have been fully aware that he had to have abundant funds, but that these riches also had to be respectable. A fortune obtained from employment as a *publicanus* might easily be detrimental to his hard-won prestige, and have made him vulnerable to the personal invective, commonly found in public life, which would have thrived on the dubious past occupation of an aspiring senator. No such adverse propaganda has been preserved in any of the sources for Marius' life, which suggests that, by the time he opened his bid for a political office, his financial resources were as conservative as those of all other politicians. Had Marius in fact

³⁴ On the business concerns of senators in general, I. Shatzman, *Senatorial Wealth and Roman Politics*, Brussels 1975, 239-439. On Marius in particular, 278-281.

³⁵ Badian, *FC* 195, Marius' link with *negotiatores*; Shatzman, *Senatorial Wealth* 278-279, his landed estates and later association with the *publicani*; T. Frank, *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*, Baltimore 1959², 1.296: 'men like ... Marius of Arpinum ... had prospered on landed estates...' but, 1.297: 'began his career relatively poor and ended as a very rich man'; Brunt, *FRR* 150-151 and n. 19, 156: '[Marius] ... enjoyed equestrian backing ...'.

³⁶ On the various bases of senatorial wealth see also Wiseman, *New Men* 191-196, estates of senators, 197-202, other business interests.

³⁷ Shatzman, *Senatorial Wealth* 281.

gained financially from links with *publicani* in Asia, this may possibly have formed the nucleus of his later profound affluence, but it had long since been invested elsewhere, and before he presented himself to the electorate.

The lack of a famous family *nomen* may not have been an impediment to success but, like all contenders for office, Marius faced the possibility of *repulsae* in competitive elections. To reduce the chances of failure, Marius had spent the traditional minimum time in the army where he had made himself conspicuous, and had gone on to win election as military tribune. Thereafter, he took a self-imposed moratorium to accumulate reserves and establish worthwhile ties, the necessities for seeking public office. There was no great suspension in Marius' career at this point, and certainly none imposed either by his being a *novus homo* or by any discrimination against outsiders in political life. Many politicians held offices at irregular intervals, and during periods outside political life they were busy ensuring that their possessions continued to flourish. Marius was not exceptional in this respect. Nor was he a great deal older than was usual when he finally entered the political arena since relatively few republican politicians held magistracies at legally required minimum ages.³⁸ The portrayal of Marius as an outsider and underdog that is apparent in Plutarch's biography is misleading, but it has been so convincing that it has remained almost unchallenged to the present day.

Quaestorship

Evidence for Marius' quaestorship is contained on the Augustan *elogium*,³⁹ now lost, and on a copy found near Arpinum (*CIL* 10 5782), but neither may be regarded as truly primary documentation for this politician's career.⁴⁰ Moreover, while the apparent corroboration by both Valerius Maximus (6.9.14) and the author of the *de Viris Illustribus* (67.1) has been held to confirm Marius' tenure of this magistracy, they fail to provide explicit

³⁸ On the ages of politicians in the second century see R. Develin, *Patterns in Office-Holding, 366-49 B.C.*, Brussels 1979, 85-95; Evans, *AHB* 4 (1990) 65-71.

³⁹ For Marius' quaestorship on the *elogium* see Sage, 1979: 204-206. A copy of the lost inscription was found at Arretium. All kinds of junior offices were recalled by the artist or his aids who composed the *elogia*, and there appear to be few errors in those inscriptions which have survived (see above, Prologue). Note, however, that there is no reference to a propraetorship in the document about Marius. See further below, Chapter 2.

⁴⁰ *CIL* 12.1 195; *ILS* 59; *Inscr. Ital.* 13.3.83. Although the *elogium* from the forum of Augustus may have been based on earlier material, as I suggested above, no contemporary material remains for Marius' quaestorship. Plutarch states, *Caes.* 5.1, that when Caesar delivered funeral *laudationes* for his wife and aunt, he used one of these occasions to bring forward trophies and statues of Marius, much to the delight of the crowd. Later, during his aedileship, Prop. 3.11.45; Plut. *Caes.* 6.1; Suet. *Iul* 10.1, Caesar had these, or more likely copies of these, restored to the Capitoline hill. However, the Marian trophies are unlikely to have contained any mention of a quaestorship.

information.⁴¹ In particular, the evidence of Valerius Maximus is contained in a work dealing with the fluctuating fortunes in a man's life ('*De Mutatione Morum aut Fortunae*'). As such, it is not a straightforward account, and warrants considerable scepticism regarding its value as a historical source. A reasonable doubt may thus be harboured about the accuracy of these sources, and it is just possible to argue that Marius' first public position at Rome was actually the tribunate which he occupied in 119. Indeed, the idea, voiced by Valerius Maximus, that a man should try his hand at senatorial politics after he was rejected by a municipal electorate fails to convince entirely. It would surely have been more common for a failed politician in the city to seek the consolation of a magistracy in his home town rather than *vice versa*.⁴²

Attention should also be paid to Sallust, the earliest source for Marius' political career, who fails to mention the quaestorship, and who was clearly under the misapprehension that he held a large number of the available regular magistracies (*Iug.* 63.4-5) when in fact he had been defeated in aedilician elections. If he was unaware that Marius had never been an aedile, then the lack of a quaestorship might also have passed unnoticed. Plutarch (*Mar.* 4.1), in a further telescoping of events, has Marius proceed immediately from serving in the army to becoming a tribune of the plebs. He may well be right about the sequence of offices.

Before the *leges Corneliae* of Sulla, the quaestorship was not a compulsory part of a politician's career, and might be avoided if another more attractive proposition was attainable.⁴³ Marius' quaestorship is usually dated to between 123 and 121, just before his election as tribune in

⁴¹ Val. Max. (6.9.14): 'quaesturam Romae petere ausus est'; *Vir. Ill.* 67.1: 'Gaius Marius septies consul, Arpinas, humili loco natus, primis honoribus per ordinem functus ...'. There is no mention here of a quaestorship, which might only be assumed had this office been the regular and compulsory first magistracy for all aspiring senators as it, in fact, became during the Early Principate. Furthermore, 'quaesturam' may even have been employed figuratively by Valerius Maximus for *honores*, although there seems to be no parallel for this usage. The phrase 'quaesturam petere' is common elsewhere, *Cic. Verr.* 1.11; *Mur.* 18; *Liv.* 32.7.9: 'consulatum ex quaestura petere'; *Tac. Ann.* 3.29: 'quaesturam peteret'; *Suet. Calig.* 1. The evidence of *Vir. Ill.* 67.1 is simply vague, but may owe something to Sallust's account, *Iug.* 63.5: 'Deinde ab eo magistratu alium post alium sibi peperit semperque in potestatibus eo modo agitabat, ut ampliore quam gerebat dignus haberetur.'

⁴² The text of Valerius Maximus was clearly formed to suit his subject. Thus Marius failed to win the aedileship but won the praetorship, a more senior office, following his supposed humiliation at Arpinum and subsequent success at Rome. The evidence here looks distinctly unsound.

⁴³ Syme, *Sallust* 28; D. C. Earl, 'The Early Career of Sallust', *Historia* 15 (1966) 306: 'Membership of the Senate could have come with the tribunate of the plebs: the removal of the disabilities imposed on the office should have restored to the tribunate the seat in the Senate it had previously conferred by virtue of the *Plebiscitum Atinium* - and which it did confer under Caesar's dictatorship and later.'

120.⁴⁴ Yet this view, besides relying on flimsy evidence, overlooks the fact that Marius had no reason whatsoever to seek this junior appointment. He was beyond the age at which most young men sought the quaestorship and at which, more importantly, he could campaign immediately for the more prestigious and influential tribunate. He had, moreover, already gained the type of experience which most quaestors obtained during their year in office. Several of the quaestors were annually assigned to military duties,⁴⁵ as the following list illustrates:

- Ti. Sempronius Gracchus: quaestor in Spain with C. Hostilius Mancinus (cos. 137)
- Q. Fabius Maximus Allobrogicus: served in Spain under Scipio Aemilianus (cos. II 134)
- Q. Fabius Maximus Eburnus: in Sicily with P. Rupilius (cos. 132)
- C. Sempronius Gracchus: quaestor in Sardinia with L. Aurelius Orestes (cos. 126)
- M. Annius: served in Macedonia under Sex. Pompeius (pr. 119)
- M. Aurelius Scaurus: quaestor under L. (Valerius) Flaccus (pr. 117?)
- M. Antonius: served in Asia with L. Memmius (pr. 113?)
- P.(?) Sextius: quaestor in Numidia with L. Calpurnius Bestia (cos. 111)
- L. Licinius Crassus: in Asia ca. 110 (Cic. *de Orat* 3.75)
- L. Cornelius Sulla: quaestor in Numidia with C. Marius (cos. I 107)
- Cn. Octavius Ruso: in Numidia ca. 105 with C. Marius (cos. I 107)
- Cn. Servilius Caepio: quaestor in Macedonia ca. 105
- Cn. Pompeius Strabo: served in Sardinia with T. Albucius (pr. 106)
- L. (Veturius) Philo: quaestor in Sicily under C. Servilius (pr. 102)
- A. Gabinius: quaestor in Cilicia with M. Antonius (pr. 102)
- C. Norbanus: served either in Cilicia or Rome with M. Antonius (propr. 101, cos. 99)
- C. Fundanius: in Gaul with C. Marius (cos. V 101?)

At this stage in his career Marius did not require still more service in the army, but he would most definitely have benefited from becoming a tribune, a more prominent post, and one which was primarily concerned with political and legal matters.

The number of quaestors above represents only a very tiny percentage of the total number elected – sixteen out of four hundred and eighty, at least, in the period between 140 and 100, excluding *suffecti*. Nevertheless, it is worth noting those quaestors engaged in active military duty, since in an average year six to eight of these new magistrates could be appointed as seconds-in-command to consuls or praetors who might in turn be sent abroad. Senior officials were despatched overseas during their year in office

⁴⁴ MRR 3.140; Carney, *Marius* 17–18; and most recently, M. Cébeillac-Gervasoni, 'Le mariage dans l'aristocratie dirigeante des cités du Latium et de la Campanie à la fin de la République et sous Auguste', *Mélanges Pierre Lévêque*, Paris 1989, 69–70 and n. 12.

⁴⁵ Carney, *Marius* 18 n. 90.

until the legislation of Sulla in 81, and quaestors stood a good chance of accompanying them. There was obviously much less chance of obtaining a purely civilian position in the city as a quaestor, which would have made the office undesirable to a man of Marius' experience.⁴⁶

The quaestorship was largely irrelevant to Marius' chances of a successful political career, and his entry into the senate.⁴⁷ He was faced with a magistracy of limited scope and opportunities when he was already of an age to canvass for the tribunate, the possession of which also allowed entry to the senatorial order. Valerius Maximus may be correct to claim that Marius came to Rome to campaign for public office, but perhaps not for the comparatively inconsequential quaestorship. The information which appeared on Marius' *elogium* belonged to a time when the quaestorship was regularly the first compulsory magistracy of a politician's career. In the pre-Sullan period a political career was much less structured⁴⁸ and, considering the weakness of the evidence, it may be argued that Marius omitted the quaestorship and, instead, initially sought to make a name for himself as a tribune of the plebs.

Tribunate

Valerius Maximus (6.9.14) suggests that Marius received a *repulsa* when he first attempted to win the tribunate, presumably in 121, a year before his successful election.⁴⁹ The dependability of the evidence from this passage has already been questioned;⁵⁰ and it may be as well to discount the information, although it might just indicate Marius' keenness to obtain this office.⁵¹ However, the notice of Marius' initial rejection for a place in the tribunician college also looks as if it has been conflated with the allusion to his double defeat for the aedileship (Cic. *Planc.* 51), which figures in the same clause: 'in tribunatus quoque et aedilitatis petitione consimilem campi notam expertus'. Failure in tribunician elections was clearly not that uncommon (Cic. *Planc.* 52),⁵² but the high incidence of defeat followed by triumph accorded to Marius looks suspiciously more like a literary device

⁴⁶ P. Decius Subulo, praetorian colleague of Marius in 115, probably also avoided becoming quaestor. E. Badian, 'P. DECIUS P.F. SUBULO: An Orator of the Time of the Gracchi', *JRS* 46 (1956) 92, believes that Decius' first public office in 120, aged about fifty, was the tribunate.

⁴⁷ Cicero, *Planc.* 52, seems to have known of one *consularis* who had never been quaestor. On his possible identity see Badian, *Studies* 152–153. See also Appendix 1.

⁴⁸ On the political career in the second century see R. J. Evans & M. Kleijwegt, 'Did the Romans like Young Men? A Study of the *lex Villia annalis*: Causes and Effects', *ZPE* 92 (1992) 181–195; and Appendix 1.

⁴⁹ *MRR* 3.140.

⁵⁰ See also Carney, *Marius* 16–17, 21–22.

⁵¹ It is also worth noting that Marius may therefore have been a tribunician candidate with Decius Subulo, who was successful in that year. Badian, 1956: 94, considers that their political inclinations were not far apart.

⁵² See below, Appendix 1.

than a historical episode. Valerius Maximus' interest in *luctatio* was surely more important than a search for the truth.

The plebeian tribunate was an attractive office because it could be exploited by politicians to establish their credentials for independent action and legislative ingenuity. Tribunes could also associate themselves closely with more senior members of the senatorial order. Indeed, Plutarch (*Mar.* 4.1) says that Marius was successful at this time because he had obtained the support of a Caecilius Metellus, whom he describes as a longstanding patron of the Marii of Arpinum (καὶ τυχεῖν δημαρχίας Κεκιλίου Μετέλλου σπουδάσαντος, οὐ τὸν οἶκον ἐξ ἀρχῆς καὶ πατρώθεν ἐθεράπευεν).⁵³ The Caecilius Metellus mentioned here is usually identified as Q. Caecilius Metellus Balaricus (cos. 123), the eldest son of Q. Caecilius Metellus Macedonicus (cos. 143), although L. Caecilius Metellus Delmaticus (cos. 119), the elder son of L. Caecilius Metellus Calvus (cos. 142), is probably a better proposition since he was actively involved in canvassing for the consulship in the same year as Marius' quest for the tribunate. Marius may well have benefited from the consular campaign of a powerful *patronus* who might also have won over voters for a junior political ally endeavouring to win one of the lower public positions.⁵⁴ It would have been quite feasible for a candidate for the consulship to join a younger politician's campaign for an office such as the tribunate. Until 153, tribunician elections invariably took place before the polls for the regular magistrates,⁵⁵ and this practice may have continued until the dictatorship of Sulla. Support for Marius from a favoured candidate for the consulship such as Metellus Delmaticus could have proved crucial.⁵⁶

⁵³ Carney, *Marius* 18; Badian, *FC* 194–195 and n. 1, who refers to the patronage of the Caecili Metelli over clients such as the Marii, Rutilii Rufi and Aemilii Scauri; Spann, *Sertorius* 8: 'the grace of the Caecili Metelli'. The ancient evidence is, however, not definitive on this issue. See also Chapter 4.

⁵⁴ Little evidence exists, however, for senior politicians giving actual support to their younger colleagues in campaigns for public office. It may be inferred from Suetonius (*Iul.* 10.1) that M. Licinius Crassus (cos. 70) partially financed Caesar's canvass for the aedileship in 65.

⁵⁵ Th. Mommsen, *Römisches Staatsrecht*, Leipzig 1887, 1.580–588; L. R. Taylor, *Roman Voting Assemblies from the Hannibalic War to the Dictatorship of Caesar*, Ann Arbor 1966, 63 and n. 12.

⁵⁶ The recommendation of candidates for more junior offices was clearly a common practice. Q. Fabius Maximus Allobrogicus (q. 134) is said to have been commended to the electorate by his uncle Scipio Aemilianus, elected cos. II shortly beforehand, Val. Max. 8.15.4; Cichorius, *Römische Studien* 317; *MRR* 1.491, and under whom he later served at Numantia. The *aucltoritas* of a *designatus* was evidently considerable. There is also ample evidence to show that even a consul might canvass on behalf of his preferred candidate, especially if he was a close relative, providing he was not the presiding magistrate. Thus P. Rupilius (cos. 132) campaigned for his brother in consular elections, probably in the same year as his consulship, Ap. Claudius Pulcher (cos. 185) canvassed vigorously for his brother who, as a result, won a consulship place for 184, and Cn. Baebius Tamphilus (cos. 182), presiding over the consular elections, courted voters for his brother who also won the elections, R. Develin, *The Practice of Politics at Rome 366–167 B.C.*, Brussels 1985, 132–133, 140–141, R. J. Evans,

The link between Marius and the Caecilii Metelli, which is generally thought to be historically sound, may, however, also have been rather more tenuous than Plutarch maintains. A connection of sorts is certainly attested between Q. Caecilius Metellus Numidicus and Marius at a later date by Sallust,⁵⁷ but a risk exists here of assuming an ancient patron–client bond simply on the basis of evidence of their mostly acrimonious association in 109 and 108. Plutarch had a very good reason for stressing a strong tie between Marius and the Caecilii Metelli in 120 because the subsequent rupture between them was to recur as a theme in the biography (*Mar.* 4.3, 8.3). It is therefore possible that, knowing the personal relationship between Numidicus and Marius during the Jugurthine War, a stronger connection than really existed was created with a purely literary purpose in mind. Thus Marius, the outsider and newcomer to Rome, received the help of the famous Caecilii Metelli to win his first public office, but in return repaid this generosity by breaking the alliance with a display of ingratitude and arrogance. The *popularis* tribune behaved in a dishonourable fashion, but such a breach of etiquette was to be expected from the *novus homo* from a *municipium*. *Topoi* are manifest and should be treated with some caution.

While there may be no absolute reason to refute Plutarch's claim that the Caecilii Metelli lent their support to Marius' tribunician candidacy in 120, and that they may also have entered the canvass on his behalf, the tie between the two parties could easily have originated, not long before, but during this decade when Marius was casting around for new friends with political muscle. Furthermore, in an electoral contest in which there were ten victors and probably as many unlucky competitors, an influential senatorial family such as the Caecilii Metelli is unlikely to have used its position to the advantage of just one candidate. Marius was probably one of several hopefuls who were counting on the aid of this family in their pursuit for public office. Help given by Metellus Delmaticus does not prove a long personal tie between his family and the Marii, but a recent and transient connection greatly reduces the impact of Marius' breaking off of *amicitia* and, in the process, affronting the *dignitas* of the city aristocracy, represented by the Caecilii Metelli. A lack of decorum could be expected from a political outsider, and Plutarch sensationalized an episode which, if not invented

⁵⁷ 'Candidates and Competition in Consular Elections at Rome between 218 and 49 BC', *Acta Classica* 34 (1991) 111–136.

⁵⁷ This may be inferred from Metellus Numidicus' infamous retort to Marius' request to return to Rome to canvass for the consulship: 'Ac postea saepius eadem postulanti fertur dixisse, ne festinaret abire, satis mature illum cum filio suo consulatum petiturum', Sall. *Iug.* 64.4; cf. Plut. *Mar.* 8.3. However, this statement, if indeed historical, hardly represents firm evidence for any closer relationship than the usual tie between a military commander and his subordinate. The fact that Sallust places this confrontation in *oratio obliqua* indicates that it was based more on rumour than on fact, and it is Plutarch alone who transmits the whole episode as if it had really occurred. See further below, Chapter 2.

by him, was extracted from a writer unsympathetic to Marius, or from a first century source which exhibited a general hostility towards tribunes.⁵⁸ As far as Plutarch was concerned, the tribunes rarely conducted themselves with propriety and, for him, Marius' zeal to achieve a personal reputation was quite in keeping with the characters of these troublesome officers of the *populus*.⁵⁹

In a discussion concerning the secrecy of ballots and the security of the voters about to register their preferences, Cicero (*Leg.* 3.38–39) states that:

pontes etiam lex Maria fecit angustos. quae si opposita sunt ambitiosis, ut sunt fere, non reprehendo.

The *lex Maria* also made the voting bridges narrow. If such measures were passed to prevent electoral corruption, as they usually were, I can find nothing to criticise in them.

This electoral law seems to have rationalized voting procedures, which had come into effect with the introduction of the ballot system under the terms of the *lex Gabinia* of 139, and also for trials before the people (*perduellio*) as stipulated by the *lex Cassia tabellaria* of 137. Cicero intimates that the intention of the *lex Maria* was to prevent the bribery and corruption of the voting public, and to curtail harassment of citizens on their way to cast their ballots by supporters and election managers of candidates in the various elections, or by friends and allies of politicians who stood accused of crimes before the people. Plutarch (*Mar.* 4.2) casts a rather different light on the situation, however, and states that:

ἐν δὲ τῇ δημαρχίᾳ νόμον τινὰ περὶ ψηφοφορίας γράφοντος αὐτοῦ δοκοῦντα τῶν δυνατῶν ἀφαιρεῖσθαι τὴν περὶ τὰς κρίσεις ἰσχύν.

When Marius was a tribune of the plebs he brought forward a law concerned with the method of casting the votes which was thought to reduce the power of the wealthy in law suits.

Plutarch's assessment of the *lex Maria* is perhaps more simplistic than Cicero's account because it concentrates on the role of the vote in trials, but by doing so also betrays a lack of knowledge about the polling of magistrates in the republican period.⁶⁰ Unlike Cicero, he makes the introduction of the Marian law an attack on senatorial privilege, and a highly charged and emotional issue. He clearly wanted his audience to believe that Marius

⁵⁸ The history of Cornelius Sisenna, for example, cannot have contained much favourable material about the tribunes of the plebs since it was supportive of Sulla, *Sall. Iug.* 95.2.

⁵⁹ Plutarch's hostility towards tribunes is easily spotted, *Mar.* 28.5, Saturninus, *Mar.* 34.1, Sulpicius; cf. *Sall. Iug.* 27.2, Memmius, *Iug.* 37.2, P. Lucullus and L. Annius.

⁶⁰ For Plutarch's uncertainty about detailed aspects of republican politics, but a greater awareness of the legal system see Pelling, 1986: 176–179.

was following in the well-worn tracks of other notable tribunes such as the Gracchi, and had hoisted aloft their *popularis* banner.⁶¹

Marius' entry into politics was thus portrayed in highly dramatic terms, though Cicero evidently failed to find the law particularly controversial. Plutarch's description of the subsequent breach between Marius and the Caecilii Metelli over this issue serves to enhance Marius' 'popular' image. However, a still more restrictive control of the polls, which were already very unpredictable, hardly served the interests of a would-be *popularis*, nor would the failure of his measure to become law have made success easier for its senatorial opponents. From Plutarch's account it further appears that this voting law was introduced into the senate for discussion prior to confirmation by the citizen body, and so followed the traditional route of legislative proposals and not that employed by the more unorthodox Gracchi. The consul L. Aurelius Cotta contested the bill in a senatorial debate in which Marius led the defence and, although the other consul, L. Caecilius Metellus Delmaticus, concurred with the *sententia* of his colleague, the threat of imprisonment deterred them from pressing their opposition.

It is perhaps significant that the remaining nine members of the tribunician college all seem to have stood by Marius, and in the face of such unity the senate allowed the bill to be passed, whereupon 'Marius emerged triumphant from the *curia* and presented his measure to the people who ratified the law' (Plut. *Mar.* 4.3). Plutarch plainly aimed at highlighting a further confrontation between the senatorial oligarchs (*οἱ ὀλίγοι*) and an elected representative of the people (*δημιος*).⁶² But seeing that all ten tribunes came to the support of the motion, the consular reservations have probably been overemphasized and rather distorted in the attempt to portray Marius in a popular role. As a consequence of this action, Plutarch would have his audience believe that Marius had marked himself out as a man of the people pitted against the senate. The writer intended that his subject should play this part throughout most of his career, but the actual events of 119 do not support his portrayal of a politician opposed to the senatorial government.

The *lex Maria* was a strict but reasonable law, and must surely have had tremendous support from all quarters, while senatorial reaction was probably not as negative as Plutarch makes out. His focus on a 'popular' Marius overrides all other aspects of the episode: 'everyone now believed that he was afraid of nothing, not to be deterred by respect of others and a great champion of the people in opposition to the senate' (Plut. *Mar.* 4.3). His guardianship of the people was therefore established and could be developed

⁶¹ See Pelling, 1986: 165-169, for Plutarch's portrayal of republican politics as a perpetual contest between the senate and the populace.

⁶² Pelling, 1986: 165-169.

later in his consulship through his military reforms and his alliances with other tribunes of the plebs. When Marius' 'popular' legislation is analysed, however, it appears to be little more than a technical adjustment and not the result of major agitation. Neither the ballot nor the method of voting for the magistrates was threatened by the passage of the *lex Maria*. Moreover, Marius' successful opposition to a *lex frumentaria* won general applause, and duly brought him recognition as a politician outside any pressure group (Plut. *Mar.* 4.4). This action remains unattested elsewhere, which implies that it was a rather minor enterprise, but was perhaps perceptible enough to maintain a certain amount of prominence in public life.⁶³ It seems as if Marius made the most of the opportunities available to him in order to mount a campaign for curule office;⁶⁴ opportunism, moreover, was to become a characteristic feature of his later career.

The remaining information about Marius' tribunate is paradoxically to be found in the only primary source for this time: the reverse type of the denarii issued by the *monetalis* P. Licinius Nerva (pr. 104?), dated to 113 or 112:⁶⁵

Voting scene – one voter on l. of *pons* receives ballot from attendant below, another voter on r. of *pons* places ballot in *cista*; above, P. NERVA; at top of coin, bar on which stands a tablet bearing letter P.⁶⁶

The existence of political and family propaganda on the republican denarius has long been acknowledged,⁶⁷ but a difficulty exists with this particular issue since no family tie or political connection is known between Nerva and Marius. Nerva was praetor about 104, and would therefore have been a relatively senior moneyer by 113, presumably shortly before attempting to win an aedileship, at the latest 108/107, or possibly a tribunate in

⁶³ See further below, Chapter 3.

⁶⁴ Tribunician legislation could clearly promote a politician's chances in public life. Although a career is not attested for the tribune A. Gabinus, who piloted the first ballot proposal into law in 139, his descendants certainly prospered: A. Gabinus (q. 101, pr. 91/90?), P. Gabinus (pr. 90/89), A. Gabinus (cos. 58), *MRR* 3.97–98. The *lex Cassia* of 137 obviously did not hamper the career of L. Cassius Longinus Ravilla (cos. 127), nor did the tribunician legislation of M. Livius Drusus in 122 adversely affect his chances of a consulship in 112. The controversial laws of Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus in 104/3 and L. Marcius Philippus in ca. 104, were not harmful to their later illustrious careers in the senate.

⁶⁵ Crawford, *RRC* 1.306–307, no. 292; *MRR* 3.124. P. Licinius Nerva, pr. 105/104, *MRR* 1.559 and n. 3.

⁶⁶ Crawford, *RRC* 1.307, no. 292: 'The precise motivation behind the choice of type is uncertain – it is perhaps less plausible to associate it with C. Licinius Crassus, TR. PL. 145 ... than with C. Marius ...'; *MRR* 3. 124; Mattingly, 1982: 41. A voting tablet is also illustrated on the denarius of C. Coelius Caldus, *monetalis* in 51, which refers to the *lex Coelia tabellaria* of his father passed in about 107, Crawford, *RRC*. 1.457–459, no. 437; R. J. Evans, 'The Denarius Issue of CALDVS IIIIVIR and Associated Problems' *AHB* 5 (1991) 129–134.

⁶⁷ For instance, Wiseman, *New Men* 4; Evans, *Acta Classica* 33 (1990) 104–105.



Denarius issued by C. (Caecilius) Metellus (cos. 113) ca. 125. The reverse has Jupiter, in a biga of elephants, holding a thunderbolt in his left hand. Jupiter is crowned with a laurel wreath by a flying Victory. The type refers to the battle of Panormus in 251.

112/111.⁶⁸ The 'P' on the voting tablet must surely be a declaration by 'Publius' that he was about to seek a higher magistracy in the near future. However, a denarius issued far in advance of a forthcoming candidacy would have been ineffective, and a reference to the *lex Maria*, a somewhat minor piece of legislation, the mover of which had failed to win an aedileship, may be viewed as neither efficacious nor auspicious.

Most moneyers, by this time, were placing personal details or family fame on the coinage and were seldom, if at all, employing their issues on behalf of other politicians. Nerva's reverse type may connote a family relationship with Marius, or may simply be a reference to the voting procedure with the message 'Vote for P (Nerva)!'. The date of the issue, advanced by Crawford, ties in reasonably well with Marius' return from a proconsular command in Hispania Ulterior,⁶⁹ but that same date fits uncomfortably into Nerva's career. There seems to be little point in issuing a plea for the voters' favour unless Nerva intended campaigning for a public office. Thus three

⁶⁸ His brother, C. Licinius Nerva, was tribune between 120 and 110, Cic. *Brut.* 129; MRR 3.124; G. V. Sumner, *The Orators in Cicero's 'Brutus': Prosopography and Chronology*, Toronto 1973, 75-76.

⁶⁹ MRR 1.534 and n. 3; cf. A. Passerini, *Caio Mario*, Milan 1971, 23 n. 2; *Studi su Caio Mario*, Milan 1971, 21-22 and n. 22, who expresses some doubt about a governorship in Spain; MRR 3.130: 'remained there until Piso came to succeed him in 113'; Sumner, *Orators* 72. See also Chapter 2.

options seem to exist: that this denarius belongs to 118/117 when the Marian law was still current news, and when it could precede Nerva's acquisition of a quaestorship;⁷⁰ that it belongs to 113/112, as suggested by Crawford on the basis of coin hoard evidence, when it may have preceded Nerva's quest for a tribunate; or that it belongs to about 109 before a campaign for the aedileship. This last date is, of course, also seminal to Marius' career for the denarius of Nerva would therefore coincide with the Arpinate's consular campaign for 107. Were it possible to show that Nerva's career included an aedileship or a canvass for this office in about 109 or 108, his denarius in circulation portraying a reference to the *lex Maria* might suggest that a political alliance between him and Marius had recently been forged, during the preliminary stages of the Arpinate's quest for the highest magistracy.⁷¹

The evidence for Marius' tribunate, such as it is, indicates that it was noteworthy rather than tumultuous. He gained this position with the probable support of L. Caecilius Metellus Delmaticus (cos. 119), though not necessarily as a candidate who was especially intimate or long connected with the consul's family. The voting law of Marius was just sufficiently controversial to be remembered, but the altercation in the senate described in Plutarch's life is likely to be an exaggeration of the actual events. More important, surely, was the way in which Marius can be seen preparing the way for an assault on the more senior offices of a political career; he was clearly not to be content with being a *pedarius*. Marius' tribunate was not exemplified by overt *popularis* action, but by enough prominent activity to make his name known. When compared to other tribunes in the period between 140 and 100 who, through their industry, made names for themselves, Marius' performance was quite creditable, laying whatever foundations he could to increase his chances of future success. He certainly joins a fairly select group of tribunes whose activities in their year in office have been preserved in the literature.⁷²

Ti. Claudius Asellus (trib. 140): prosecuted Scipio Aemilianus

A. Gabinius (trib. 139): *lex Gabinia*

C. Curiatius (trib. 138): imprisoned the consuls P. Scipio Nasica and D. Brutus Callaicus

Sex. Licinius (trib. 138): acted with his colleague against the consuls

⁷⁰ Crawford, *RRC* 1.65-68, discounts the earliest of these dates on stylistic grounds.

⁷¹ It is interesting to note that Nerva's issue is almost a prototype in terms of its portrayal of a recent political event in Rome. Cf. Crawford, *RRC* 1.288, no. 263, the denarius of M. Caecilius Metellus (cos. 115), dated to about 127, with its reference to the Macedonian victories of his father, Macedonicus, in 148; Crawford, *RRC* 1.290, no. 266, the issue of C. Cassius Longinus (cos. 124?), which refers to the *lex Cassia tabellaria*.

⁷² Fifty-six tribunes are known, or are here posited, out of a total of four hundred elected, excluding *suffecti*. The majority of these remained in the lower levels of the senatorial order, though several of those noted rose to high magisterial office, possibly as a result of making a name for themselves as tribunes.

- L. Cassius Longinus Ravilla (trib. 137): *lex Cassia tabellaria*
 M. Antius Briso (trib. 137): failed in his attempt to veto Longinus' law
 P. Rutilius (trib. 136): prevented C. Hostilius Mancinus (cos. 137) from entering the senate
 Ti. Sempronius Gracchus (trib. 133): *lex Sempronia agraria*
 M. Octavius (trib. 133): vetoed Gracchus' bill but deposed as tribune
 Q. Mucius (?) (trib. 133): elected to replace Octavius
 L.(?) Rubrius (trib. 133): presided over tribunician elections for 132
 P. Satureius (trib. 133): opponent of Ti. Gracchus
 C. Papirius Carbo (trib. 131/130): *lex Papiria tabellaria*
 C. Atinius Labeo (trib. 131): threatened to have the censor
 Q. Metellus Macedonicus thrown from the Tarpeian Rock
 Q. Aelius Tubero (trib. 130?): ruled that augurs might serve as *iudices*
 M. Iunius Pennus (trib. 126) expelled non-citizens from Rome
 M. Iunius Silanus (trib. 124/123?): *lex Iunia repetundarum*
 C. Sempronius Gracchus (trib. 123/122): *lex Sempronia agraria*
 (?) Aufeius (trib. 123?): *lex Aufeia*
 M. Fulvius Flaccus (trib. 122): senior ally of C. Gracchus
 M. Livius Drusus (trib. 122): *lex de coloniis*
 C.(?) Rubrius (trib. 122): *lex Rubria*
 M'. Acilius Glabrio (trib. 122): *lex Acilia repetundarum*
 Cn. Marcus Censorinus (trib. 122?): a law dealing with the election of *tribuni militum*
 (?) Maevius (trib. 121?): opponent of C. Gracchus
 M.(?) Minucius Rufus (trib. 121): sought to overturn the Gracchan laws.
 L. Calpurnius Bestia (trib. 121/120): proposed law recalling P. Popillius Laenas (cos. 132) from exile
 P. Decius Subulo (trib. 120): prosecuted L. Opimius (cos. 121)
 C. Licinius Nerva (trib. 120-110): possible demagogic activity, Cic. *Brut.* 129
 C. Marius (trib. 119): voting law and defeats a proposal concerned with the corn-dole
 Sex. Peducaeus (trib. 113): moved law appointing L. Cassius Longinus Ravilla as *quaesitor*
 Sp. Thorius (trib. 111?): *lex Thoria*
 C. Memmius (trib. 110): attacked senior senators for bribery
 C. Baebius (trib. 110): interposed veto to prevent Jugurtha from answering questions before the citizen body
 L. Annius (trib. 110): disrupted elections
 P. Lucullus (trib. 110): disrupted elections with Annius
 P. Silius (trib. 110-100?): *lex Silia de ponderibus publicis*
 M. Silius (trib. 110-100?): *lex Silia de ponderibus publicis*
 C. Mamilius Limetanus (trib. 109): *quaestio Mamiliana*
 C. Coelius Caldus (trib. 107): *lex Coelia tabellaria* and prosecution of C. Popillius
 L. Licinius Crassus (trib. 107?): Cic. *Brut.* 160-161
 T. Manlius Mancinus (trib. 107): proposed *plebiscitum*
 Q. Mucius Scaevola (trib. 106?): presided at a *contio*
 C. Servilius Glaucia (trib. 105/104/101?): *lex iudiciaria*
 L. Cassius Longinus (trib. 104): *lex Cassia*
 Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus (trib. 104?): *lex Domitia*

- L. Marcius Philippus (trib. 104?): *lex agraria*
 (?) Clodius (trib. 104?): law regulating coinage
 L. Appuleius Saturninus (trib. 103): *lex de maiestate*
 M. Baebius (Tampphilus?) (trib. 103): tried to veto Saturninus' laws
 C. Norbanus (trib. 103): prosecuted Q. Servilius Caepio (cos. 106)
 T. Didius (trib. 103): tried to interpose veto on behalf of Caepio
 L. (Aurelius?) Cotta (trib. 103): joined Didius in support of Caepio
 L. (Antistius?) Reginus (trib. 103): freed the imprisoned Caepio whom he joined in exile
 A. Pompeius (trib. 102): contested with Battaces, priest of the *Magna Mater*
 L. Appuleius Saturninus (trib. II 100): *lex de coloniis*

Aedileship and Praetorship

According to Plutarch (*Mar.* 5.1), Marius failed to be elected when he sought the first of the curule offices, namely the aedileship. Immediately after this *repulsa* he began canvassing for the plebeian aedileship, the elections for which were being conducted on the same day, but suffered an unprecedented second defeat. Shortly after what must have been a most humiliating experience, he redoubled his efforts for the praetorian elections and was elected to the sixth and final place (Plut. *Mar.* 5.2). After this surprising electoral turnabout Marius was prosecuted for *ambitus*,⁷³ but was acquitted on a tied vote (Plut. *Mar.* 5.2–5).⁷⁴

Plutarch gives the impression that Marius' two candidacies for the aedileship and his successful election to the praetorship took place in 116 since all three episodes are related in quick succession (*Mar.* 5.1–2). But there are a number of specific points in his account which appear to be incompatible with what is generally understood about electoral procedures in the second century. On the grounds that Plutarch's order of elections was frankly impossible in the electoral calendar – the praetors were elected before the aediles – the text must be regarded either as factually incorrect or as a truncated version of events which occurred over a considerably longer period of time. In either case, the evidence for Marius' career between 118 and 116 warrants some analysis.

Marius was already over forty years of age in 116 and, if a candidate for the curule aedileship at that time, roughly four years above what is usually regarded as the minimum age, though this by itself would have been

⁷³ On the charge see D. R. Shackleton Bailey, 'The Prosecution of Roman Magistrates Elect', *Phoenix* 24 (1970) 163.

⁷⁴ An analysis of Gruen, *RPCC* 304–310, clearly illustrates that the vast majority of defendants in politically motivated trials were acquitted by the equestrian *iudices*. Moreover, while Marius may originally have been an *equus Romanus*, his connections with the order, as a whole, were surely no greater than those of very many other Roman politicians. The jury cannot have been inherently biased towards Marius, as Carney, *Marius* 22 contends, for the result was tied. Such a close decision implies that Marius was perceived as being guilty of the charges brought against him.

unexceptional since numerous politicians reached senior magistracies well after the ages imposed either by the *lex Villia annalis* or by *mos maiorum*.⁷⁵ A canvass for this particular magistracy, which was traditionally expensive for its incumbents, shows that Marius, a very short time after his tribunate, had the resources not only to fund a campaign, but also to serve as an aedile.⁷⁶ However, since the competition for this office was extraordinarily intense,⁷⁷ there was a good chance of failure, as Cicero indicates (*Planc.* 51). And with just four annually elected aediles, several politicians each year could expect to come away from the polls bitterly disappointed men.⁷⁸ A defeat for Marius at the first attempt was therefore not at all unusual, but what happened next, although deemed remarkable by Plutarch, fails to tally well with current electoral practices.

Plutarch states that the citizen body thought that Marius' hurried candidacy for the plebeian aedileship was an effrontery (*Mar.* 5.2) and consequently gave him a second *repulsa*. Carney insists that Marius campaigned for the curule aedileship in 118, the year after his tribunate and when his recent successes were still remembered by the electors.⁷⁹ However, Marius' high-profile activities of the previous year stood him in no good stead. Carney also accepts Plutarch's evidence for a second election defeat, and gives Marius a break in 117 before his praetorship campaign in the next year.⁸⁰ More recently, Broughton places Marius' candidacies for the aedileship in 117, and sidesteps the difficulties posed by Plutarch, especially ignoring the problem of a double defeat on the same day.⁸¹ The question addressed by neither Carney nor Broughton is whether two sets of aedilician elections could actually have taken place on one day, when these would have involved first summoning the *comitia populi tributa* and then the *concilium plebis* (*comitia plebis tributa* or *comitia aedilicia*).

Staveley makes the germane point that an election for two curule aediles would have taken at least five hours to conclude without mishaps.⁸² He also argues that elections for colleges of a similar size by the *concilium plebis* in one of its comitial capacities, must have been conducted to much

⁷⁵ On this see the conclusions of Develin, *Patterns* 81–95, and especially 91: 'some 70% of the consuls were above the minimum age, the majority only consul after one or two repulses'; Evans, *AHB* 4 (1990) 65–71.

⁷⁶ See Appendix 1 for a more detailed examination of this magistracy, its place in the republican political career, various functions and possible age minima.

⁷⁷ There was presumably a baker's dozen of candidates for the curule aedileship in 194, Liv. 35.10.11–12; Plut. *Aem.* 3.1, which may have been abnormally high.

⁷⁸ For defeated aedilician candidates see T. R. S. Broughton, *Candidates Defeated in Roman Elections: Some Ancient Roman 'Also-Rans'*, Trans. Am. Phil. Soc. 81.4, Philadelphia 1991, 40–44, 63.

⁷⁹ Carney, *Marius* 21 and n. 108; cf. Valgiglio, *Vita* 24.

⁸⁰ Carney, *Marius* 21–22.

⁸¹ Broughton, *Candidates* 42 and n. 6.

⁸² E. S. Staveley, *Greek and Roman Voting and Elections*, New York 1972, 189; Taylor, *RVA* 55.

the same time schedule from the actual vote to the proclamation of the results.⁸³ If the election for two plebeian aediles took as long as that for their curule colleagues, the chances of a double poll on one day diminishes appreciably. Of course, a double election may have been the normal procedure even if it entailed an exceedingly long and exhausting day for the candidates, electoral officials and voters alike. The probable venue for the gathering of these quite separate elections was the Campus Martius,⁸⁴ but the *custodes*, in charge of the mechanics of the process, may well have changed, while the presiding magistrates were certainly not identical. The electoral functions of the tribal assembly of the *populus Romanus* were directed by one of the consuls or one of the praetors, but the returning officer in the plebeian council was always a member of the tribunician college.⁸⁵ It is therefore almost beyond belief to imagine that the volatile electors of late republican Rome would have stayed in good order and enthusiastic for the completion of a second poll on a single day. By Staveley's reckoning, no fewer than ten hours were required for the vote, the count and the final result of elections for the curule and plebeian aedileships. Furthermore, this assessment of the proceedings is the lowest time-limit possible, and takes no account of any unexpected interruptions or natural intermissions. On the face of it, Plutarch's evidence regarding this matter looks highly dubious.⁸⁶

A number of solutions may be proposed to explain the profusion of Marius' candidacies and electoral assemblies which appear in Plutarch's life. Cicero states that Marius was twice defeated in aedilician elections (*Planc.* 51: '... C. Marii, qui duabus aedilitatis acceptis repulsis septies consul est factus ...'), but does not say that these reversals occurred virtually simultaneously. Compared with Plutarch, Cicero is by far the more reliable guide for contemporary or near-contemporary political affairs, and even Valerius Maximus (6.9.14), whose work may otherwise be unsound owing to its emphasis on the peaks and troughs of a politician's career, omitted to exploit an episode which would have added greatly to his theme. Sallust, who also ought to be more trustworthy than later writers, likewise fails to mention this event. The evidence as a whole is not conclusive but because Cicero, with a reference to the double defeat for the aedileship, does not include in that place the astounding business of a double *repulsa* on the same day and, since Plutarch's appreciation of republican voting procedures was distinctly weak, the idea that Marius was rejected by the Roman electorate twice in the space of twelve hours may be discounted.

⁸³ Staveley, *Elections* 189.

⁸⁴ Taylor, *RVA* 55.

⁸⁵ A. M(omigliano), *OCD*² 272.

⁸⁶ I doubt very much whether the time factor would be affected to any great extent if the patri-
cians had no vote in the *comitia populi tributa* as R. Develin, 'Comitia Tributa Again', *Athenaeum*
55 (1977) 425-426, following Mommsen, *RS*³ 2.483 n. 2, has argued.

Carney's contention that after he was tribune in 119 Marius campaigned for the aedileship in 118 may be attractive, but it is just not possible. Down to 160 two patricians held the curule aedileship in odd years while plebeians occupied this magistracy in even years. A patrician pair, C. Claudius Pulcher (cos. 92) and L. Valerius Flaccus (cos. suff. 86), is still found in 99, but by 91, when M. Claudius Marcellus was curule aedile (Cic. *de Orat.* 1.57), the rule had evidently disappeared.⁸⁷ The careers of several politicians fit well with this proposition which indicates that the practice was enforced down to 99. Scipio Aemilianus was a candidate for the curule aedileship in 148, M. Aemilius Scaurus in 122, P. Licinius Crassus was possibly aedile in 102 and L. Licinius Crassus and Q. Mucius Scaevola held this office together probably in 100.⁸⁸ It is therefore altogether more feasible for Marius to have taken eighteen rather than six months to canvass for a curule office for, on the one hand, his tribunate had been hectic and, on the other, although a wealthy man, like most republican politicians, he needed the additional time to invest in a new campaign.⁸⁹ Moreover, had it been possible for him to canvass in 118, the voters might well have construed his excessive haste as an indication of *ambitio* had he dashed from one public office to another, even when no *biennium* was applicable.⁹⁰ He certainly antagonized the voters in his luckless pursuit for aedileships. Thus his canvass for the curule aedileship must belong to 117.

In customary sequence, the elections for the plebeian aedileship probably took place shortly before those for the tribunician college.⁹¹ And it seems plausible to suggest that the meeting of the *concilium plebis* followed some days or weeks after an assembly of the *comitia tributa*, during which time Marius would have made his *professio* or intention to become a candidate known to the presiding officer and have his candidacy allowed.⁹² Even

⁸⁷ MRR 2.1 and n. 4, 2.21 and n. 7.

⁸⁸ MRR 1.462, 1.517 and n. 3, 1.568, 1.575. See also Appendix 3.

⁸⁹ Cicero, for example, was already canvassing informally for the consulship of 63 by July 65, *Att.* 1.1.1. It is conceivable that if Carney is correct, Marius was defeated in 118 because of insufficient preparation.

⁹⁰ For a stipulated *biennium* between curule magistracies see A. E. Astin, 'The Lex Villia Annalis before Sulla', *Latomus* 17 (1958) 63-64, but that no such rule applied between the tribunate and aedileship, Carney, *Marius* 20 and n. 108. However, Develin, *Patterns* 95, argues that *biennia* were informal and not subject to legislation; Appendix 1 below.

⁹¹ Taylor, *RVA* 63: 'The Plebeian aediles were on a different schedule from that used for regular magistracies ... the choice of tribunes and aediles of the plebs, ... assigned normally to the same month July.' It is highly unlikely, even if these procedures were not in force in the second century and that sufficient time was available, that elections for both types of aediles would have coincided.

⁹² A. E. Astin, 'Professio in the Arbortive Election of 184 B.C.', *Historia* 11 (1962) 252: 'the *professio* had to be made at least a specified length of time, the *trinundinum* before the date of the election'; Earl, 1965: 328: '[T]here was a period of time before the consular elections in which formal *professiones* had to be made and this period ended some days before the elections itself.' On *professiones* in general see Taylor, *RVA* 16, 19, 74, 144 n. 35; Staveley, *Elections* 147.

assuming that the *trinundinum* did not apply, and that late candidacies might be confirmed, the timetable involving two aedilician elections on one day looks unbearably overloaded.⁹³ In fact, there are just too many obstacles for Plutarch's assertion that four aediles were elected at the same time to be given much credence. Marius' praetorship campaign may be safely consigned to 116 and followed his spectacular double failure in 117, though these *repulsae* were some weeks apart. His successful election as praetor thus proved to be an instance of 'third-time lucky' and a reward for perseverance.

In his ignorance of republican political etiquette, Plutarch may have believed that all three of Marius' campaigns were dated to 116, especially since he places the elections in the closest chronological proximity. Although irreconcilable with the rule for holding the *curule aedileship* and the usual order of elections, there is some sense here if the author thought that Marius had won an election for a *suffect* place in the praetorian college of 115 (*Mar.* 5.2)

καὶ δυσὶν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ μῖζ περιπεσῶν ἀποτεύξεσιν, ὃ μηδεὶς ἔπαθεν ἄλλος, οὐδὲ μικρὸν ὑφίκατο τοῦ φρονήματος, ὕστερον δὲ οὐ πολλῶ στρατηγίαν μετελθὼν ὀλίγον ἐδέησεν ἐκπεσεῖν, ...
Though he had been defeated twice in one day, something which had never happened to a single candidate before, he did not lose heart, but campaigned for the praetorship soon afterwards and missed defeat by a hair's breadth ...

Marius would have been elected as a *suffectus* to the sixth and last place to fill a vacancy created by the sudden death of a praetor designate and would probably have faced stiff competition to win this unexpected honour. Thus in 184 a poll for a *suffect* praetor involved no fewer than four candidates, three of whom were doubtless failed contenders from the original elections. The fourth candidate was Q. Fulvius Flaccus, who was already an aedile, and when he refused to withdraw his illegal candidacy the senate decreed that the elections be abandoned.⁹⁴

The accusation of *ambitus* following an election was not a novel experience for any republican politician, and thus a charge of electoral malpractice coming after an extraordinary poll for a single officer, which was likely to have produced greater passions, made a prosecution against the

⁹³ Earl, 1965: 330, points out that exceptions to the rule may be identified in the second century. Both Scipio Aemilianus in 148 and Q. Pompeius in the consular elections in 142 may have been excused from making a formal *professio*. Marius may, in a similar fashion, have been able to circumvent what was evidently traditional practice and not legally sanctioned. Although Cicero noted that Marius was capable of subtle intrigue, Carney, *WS* 73 (1960) 84, he fails to mention any scheming with regard to this affair.

⁹⁴ Astin, 1962: 252-256; Develin, *Practice* 286, who follows Livy, 39.39.1-5, by considering that Flaccus was aedile designate; cf. R. Rilinger, *Der Einfluss des Wahlleiters bei den römischen Konsulwahlen von 366 bis 50 v. Chr.*, Munich 1976, 182 and n. 18; Broughton, *Candidates* 38, who, after Mommsen, *RS*³ 1.513, n. 3, both note that Flaccus was probably already an aedile in that year.

victor, whoever he was, almost a certainty. The details of Marius' trial *de ambitu* (Plut. *Mar.* 5.3-5) look suspiciously apocryphal, however, especially the tale of the senator Cassius Sabaco whose servant supplied him with water while he waited in the voting lines.⁹⁵ A certain C. Herennius was called as a prosecution witness, but he declined to give his evidence because a patron was not obliged to testify against a client. He stated that the Marii were clients of his family, a claim accepted by the court. In response, the defendant argued that, since he had just been elected a praetor, such a relationship was not relevant to the case. In a rather muddled statement, Plutarch says that Marius was wrong to lay so much stress on this point, completely forgetting that the praetorship was a curule magistracy, the possession of which, as he states, brought any former patron-client connections to an end. Marius' denial of his link with the Herennii was technically correct, though as yet he was merely praetor designate, and the move to embarrass him failed. The jury may have been antagonized by the sophistry employed by the prosecuting counsel, and failed to reach an agreement as a result. Marius won his case.

οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ ταῖς πρώταις ἡμέραις ἐν τῇ δίκῃ κακῶς πράττων ὁ Μάριος καὶ χαλεποῖς χρώμενος τοῖς δικασταῖς, τῇ τελευταίᾳ παραλόγως ἀπέφυγεν ἴσων τῶν ψήφων γενομένων. Marius' case went badly during the trial's early course, and he saw that the jurors were alien to his cause but, against all expectation, the vote on the final day was tied and he was acquitted.

The text of Plutarch's life is sufficiently incomprehensible to allow for a number of interpretations. A close reading of his account may indeed produce a plausible track through the Plutarchian mire; and the implication that Marius was determined to win a curule office at all cost, with the description of candidacies one after another, suits the picture of desperate campaigning in which all and everything was attempted and which inevitably ended in a showpiece trial. It should be recognized, however, that Marius failed in two aedileship elections in 117 and won a place among the praetors in 116 after a single conventional election campaign.⁹⁶ Finally, yet one further point deserves to be mentioned. Marius' acquittal brought instant entry to the upper echelons of the senatorial order through the possession of a praetorship. Since I have argued that the evidence for his quaestorship

⁹⁵ A whole day spent on the Campus Martius exercising his duties as a citizen might well explain Cassius Sabaco's plight, however, and it was rather unfair of the censors, L. Caecilius Metellus (Delmaticus or Diadematus) and Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus, to expel him from the senate in the very next year for behaviour unbecoming a member of that body, Plut. *Mar.* 5.3.

⁹⁶ It could be argued, of course, that Marius deliberately canvassed for the plebeian aedileship, which was not a curule office, without too much enthusiasm since his sights were set on something better. His failure for that office might then have produced a sympathy vote in the praetorian elections.

is rather doubtful, and that he possibly did not hold this junior office, he cannot have won admission to the *ordo senatorius* in the censorship of Q. Caecilius Metellus Balaricus (cos. 123) and L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi (cos. 133) in 120–119.⁹⁷ He would nevertheless have gained senatorial status as a *tribunicus* from 119, according to the terms of the Atinian *plebiscitum*,⁹⁸ but achieved full recognition of this position only during the censorship of L. Caecilius Metellus (Delmaticus or Diadematus, coss. 119/117) and Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus (cos. 122) in his own praetorship in 115.⁹⁹

Conclusion

Unlike Carney, I cannot subscribe to the view that Marius' early career was retarded in any way at its outset. Sallust clearly believed that Marius had begun his military service at the earliest time allowed to *adulescentes*, but this information has become obscured through the more romantic notions to be found in Plutarch's biography. It is nevertheless possible to interpret certain of the details given by Plutarch about this period of Marius' life to mean that he served for a lengthy spell in Spain, which ended rather than began with the campaign against the Numantines in 134. Marius' tenure of the office of *tribunus militum* is best placed in 131 or 130 immediately after his return from Spain and while his personal *gloria* was still newsworthy. In this respect, I concur with Badian's suggestion regarding an early rather than a late military tribunate for Marius. The hiatus in Marius' otherwise full career would thus be reassigned to the 120s, and this may conjecturally be filled with duties in Arpinum and with the enlargement of his family fortune and possessions. Valerius Maximus does not state categorically that Marius never held a municipal office, but that on one occasion he failed to be elected; a magistracy in his home town in the 120s cannot be dismissed out of hand.

After he had spent the best part of a decade accumulating the sort of wealth needed to embark on a political career, Marius came to the city to campaign for the tribunate of the plebs. The evidence that he held a quaestorship is certainly not secure and could be dismissed, because he was well above the age for this junior position, which would have brought him few tangible benefits. The tribunate was a far more powerful political office to win, which conferred greater *dignitas* and automatic entry to the senatorial

⁹⁷ MRR 1.523.

⁹⁸ Syme, *Sallust* 28; Earl, 1966: 306.

⁹⁹ MRR 1.531. Although L. Caecilius Metellus Diadematus (cos. 117) is usually assigned the censorship in 115, his more distinguished cousin, L. Delmaticus, also the *pontifex maximus*, could easily have held this office, cf. MRR 1.532–533 n. 1. Delmaticus was Marius' patron in 120, as I argued above, and his attitude towards his former junior ally may still have been hostile, though he could hardly prevent his addition to the roll of the senate in that census.

order. Marius employed his year as tribune to optimum effect by illustrating to the world that he was capable of autonomous action, and that he was not to be intimidated by politicians from grand city families. He could look forward to future success with some degree of confidence.¹⁰⁰ Failure at the elections for the curule aedileship must have come as a blow to Marius' ambitions but, since the competition for this office was severe, it surely did not come like a bolt from the blue. And what if he did lose this election? It was more advantageous in the long term for a politician to present himself as an aedilician candidate than to avoid the magistracy altogether, as Sulla was later to discover to his cost (Plut. *Sull.* 5.1–2). Marius' *repulsa* for the plebeian aedileship may have happened on the same day as his defeat for its curule counterpart, as Plutarch claims, but it seems more plausible to suggest that the reverses occurred over a longer period. The date proffered by Broughton is to be preferred to the one proposed by Carney. The campaign for the praetorship belongs by itself in 116 and, somewhat paradoxically, two years earlier than would have been allowed had Marius won either of the aedileships. In point of fact his *repulsae* in 117 accelerated his career, and victory in the praetorian elections, even in sixth and final place, ensured his station among the senior ranks of the Roman senate.

¹⁰⁰ However, see below, Chapter 3, with regard to Marius' actions during his tribunate.