

On The Content and Structure of the Prologue to Cato's *Origines*

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Cicero three times paraphrases a passage from Cato's *Origines* concerning an ancient Roman quasi-historical tradition. The fullest paraphrase is in the fourth book of the *Tusculan Disputations* (4. 3):

gravissimus auctor in Originibus dixit Cato morem apud maiores hunc epularum fuisse, ut deinceps qui accubarent canerent ad tibiam clarorum virorum laudes atque virtutes.

He also paraphrases the passage in Book 1 of the same work, and in the *Brutus*.¹ In none of the citations does Cicero provide any indication from where in Cato's history the passage is taken. Most of the editors who

¹ *Tusc.* 1. 3 (quoted below, p. 104); *Brut.* 75: "atque utinam exstarent illa carmina quae multis saeculis ante suam aetatem in epulis esse cantitata a singulis convivis de clarorum virorum laudibus in Originibus reliquit Cato." Cf. Var. *De Vit. Pop. Rom.* fr. 84 Riposati (apud Non. 77. 2): "in conviviis pueri modesti ut cantarent carmina antiqua in quibus laudes erant maiorum et assa voce et cum tibicine"; Hor. *Ep.* 2. 1. 109–10: "pueri patresque severi / fronde comas vincti cenant et carmina dictant."

This paper is concerned with the use to which Cato put this statement, not the question of its accuracy or the validity of any of the reconstructions of Roman tradition (e.g. Jordan's *Niebuhr's consilium* in the passage below quoted from his introduction) which have been suggested on its basis. For a discussion (which is biased toward the possibility that it was a Catonian fabrication) of the arguments, see H. Dahlmann, "Zur Überlieferung über die altrömischen Tafellieder," *AAWM* (1950) 1191–1202, repr. in *Kleine Schriften, Collectanea* 19 (Hildesheim 1970) 23–34. A. Momigliano, *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* (Berkeley 1990) 92–94, also discusses the possible nature and ultimate fate of these songs, as well as a means by which Cato might have discovered their existence.

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approached the fragments of the *Origines* in the nineteenth century have, accordingly, not attempted to attribute the fragment to any particular portion of the work.² Karl Ludwig Roth, however, attributed the fragment to the prologue, without explanatory comment.³ Henri Jordan reacted, in the introduction to his edition (p. lix), with some vehemence and even contempt:

mirifice enim de operis Catoniani ratione et indole falsus est Rothius, cum Catonem, Niebuhrii consilium, si dis placet, praesagientem, testimonium illud in ipso proemio tamquam aliquod criticae artis instrumentum proposuisse coniecit.

Jordan offered no further evidence against Roth, but he attributed the fragment to Book 7, and Martine Chassignet has followed his lead.⁴ In fact, there is no good evidence that the fragment ought to be attributed to Book 7, and there are strong reasons to take Roth's attribution seriously.

Neither Jordan nor Chassignet has any persuasive reason for putting the fragment in Book 7. Jordan explains his reasoning (p. lix):

me quidem ea quae Festus septimo libro deprompsit (fr. 7 et 8 [= *HRR* 111, 113]) moverunt ut Catonem praeter res gestas morum a prisca simplicitate declinatorum censum egisse arbitrarer; quare adscripti eiusdem argumenti verba 9–13, quorum quod est numero 12 [= *HRR* 118], inlustre de carminibus convivalibus testimonium, cum ex originibus fluxisse diserte traditum sit, quo libro potius adscribendum fuerit, equidem non video.

Chassignet (p. xli) includes this and several otherwise unassigned fragments in Book 7 because they concern “des coutumes de Rome, anciennes ou contemporaines de Caton, visiblement de la même veine que les fragments VII, 7 et 9 [= *HRR* 111, 113], parvenus précisément avec la référence au livre VII.” It is quite true that the fragments of Book 7 cited by Jordan and Chassignet contain cultural details. Fragment 111 concerns the kinds of shoes worn by the holders of certain magistracies.⁵ Fragment 113 is little

² *M. Porcii Catonis Originum fragmenta*, ed. by A. Wagener (Bonn 1849) fr. 120; *M. Porcii Catonis Originum libri septem*, ed. by A. Bormann (Brandenburg 1858) fr. 123; *Historicorum Romanorum Reliquiae*, ed. by H. Peter (Leipzig 1914, 1906, 1870 [Stuttgart 1967]) fr. 118. Peter's numeration (e.g. “*HRR* 118”) will be followed throughout.

³ *Historicorum Veterum Romanorum Reliquiae*, ed. by K. L. Roth (in *Gaii Salustii Crispi Catilina, Iugurtha, Historiarum Reliquiae*, ed. by F. Gerlach [Basel 1853]) fr. 5. Cf. C. Letta, “L' ‘Italia dei mores Romani’ nelle Origines di Catone,” *Athenaeum* 62 (1984) 26, but see below, p. 103; P. Cugusi, “Il proemio delle *Origines* di Catone,” *Maia* 46 (1994) 265, 269–70, 272.

⁴ *M. Catonis Praeter Librum De Re Rustica Quae Extant*, ed. by H. Jordan (Leipzig 1860) fr. 7. 12; *Caton: Les Origines (Fragments)*, ed. by M. Chassignet (Paris 1986) fr. 7. 13.

⁵ Fest. p. 142 M: “mulleos genus calceorum aiunt esse; quibus reges Albanorum primi, deinde patricii sunt usi. M. Cato Originum lib. vii: qui magistratum curulem cepisset calceos mulleos aluta laciniatos, ceteri perones.”

more than a list of women's finery.⁶ Between the two fragments, taken out of context, there is little indication of a general digression on culture, much less cultural decline. As Cesare Letta points out, there is no support for the conclusion that there must have been a digression, since "in ogni caso, notizie di contenuto morale dovevano essere disseminate in tutta l'opera."⁷

On the other hand, Chassignet further attempts to justify her inclusion of fragment 119 in Book 7 by connecting it to a contemporary controversy involving two sumptuary laws. As she makes no comment regarding fragment 118, it may be that she intends the argument concerning fragment 119 to apply to it by extension.⁸ She suggests (106) that, in the hypothetical cultural digression in Book 7 of the *Origines* (which she apparently accepts from Jordan), Cato recorded his polemic against the loosening of the restrictions of the *lex Orchia* or the *lex Fannia*. One might alternatively suggest that one or both debates found their way into the narrative of the *Origines*.

The *lex Orchia* was passed in 182 B.C.E. to regulate the number of dinner-guests allowed on any given occasion. The ineffectiveness of the law in controlling convivial expenditures occasioned the passage in 161 of the *lex Fannia*, which added provisions limiting the amount of money which could be spent.⁹ We know that Cato spoke against the repeal of the *lex Orchia*.¹⁰ If the last four books of the *Origines* were organized chronologically, Cato would most probably have included this speech in Book 5 (if at all), since his speech on behalf of the Rhodians, which we know he included in Book 5,¹¹ was delivered in 167. If he recorded the debate surrounding the *lex Fannia*, which took place six years or so after the Rhodian speech, it would presumably have been included late in Book 5 or early in Book 6. If these late books were organized according to theatres of war, there is little room to speculate where these controversies might have

⁶ Fest. pp. 262, 265 M: "ruscum est, ut ait Verrius, amplius paullo herba, . . . cuius coloris rebus uti mulieres solitas commemorat Cato Originum lib. vii: mulieres opertae auro purpuraque; arsinea, rete, diadema, coronas aureas, rusceas fascias, galbeas lineas, pelles, redimicula."

⁷ Letta (above, note 3) 30 n. 156.

⁸ It is tempting to assume that the two fragments, since they happen to mention details of dining practice, come from the same passage. There is, however, no evidence that they are even from the same work; see below, note 13.

⁹ Macr. 3. 17. 2-5; Gel. 2. 24. 4-6; cf. Cic. *Fam.* 7. 26, 2. 9. 15. 5; *Att.* 13. 7. 1.

¹⁰ *Dissuasio ne lex Orchia derogaretur*, fr. 139-46 M. For a full discussion of the title, identity, and nature of the oration, see P. Fraccaro, "M. Porcio Catone e la Lex Orchia Sumptuaria," in *Opuscula I* (Pavia 1956) 233-37; cf. B. Janzer, *Historische Untersuchungen zu den Redenfragmenten des M. Porcius Cato: Beiträge zur Lebensgeschichte und Politik Catos* (diss. Würzburg 1936) 53-57.

¹¹ Gel. 6. 3. 7.

found their way into the text, if at all, since they would seem of limited relevance to any particular military conflict.¹²

However plausible or otherwise it may appear that these controversies found their way into the *Origines* at some point or another, there is no clear connection between the issues of these laws and fragment 118 of the *Origines*. Fragment 119, as it refers to older and more simple dining practices, could belong to such a discussion. Unfortunately, fragment 119 is reported by Servius without any indication that it stems even from the *Origines*.¹³ Fragment 118 is relevant to dinner practices only because the songs of praise follow dinner. There is no obvious connection to the expense of the dinner itself, much less the number of guests. Fragment 118 cannot be assigned to Book 7 or any other place in the later books except by speculation. On the other hand, it can be shown to be perfectly appropriate to the purpose and probable structure of the prologue, and there are indications that it may belong there.

A careful comparison between the prologue to the *De Agricultura* and the existing fragments of and testimony for the prologue to the *Origines* can be used to construct the most probable paradigm for the kinds of arguments Cato was likely to have used in the remainder of the latter prologue. We know from the testimony of an ancient rhetorical handbook that Cato's prologue defends in general terms the value of history:

principiorum ad historiam pertinentium species sunt tres: de historia, de persona, de materia. aut enim historiae bonum generaliter commendamus, ut Cato, aut pro persona scribentis rationem eius quod hoc officium adsumpserit reddimus, ut Sallustius eo loco, ubi dicit "sed ego adulescentulus initio, sicuti plerique, studio ad rem publicam laus sum," aut eam rem, quam relaturi sumus, dignam quae et scribatur et legatur ostendimus, ut Livius ab urbe condita.¹⁴

We can safely draw several conclusions from this testimony. First, the distinctions the rhetorician draws between the three authors are obviously not as absolute as they are stated; he is drawing general distinctions between particularities unique to each of the three, not necessarily ruling out parallels which are not related to the three kinds of arguments he contrasts between them. Indeed, Livy does not give any particular reason why he is qualified to take up the task of writing a Roman history, and Sallust (limiting our scope to the *Catiline*, as the author seems to do) does not give

¹² For a summarizing discussion with bibliography of the various reconstructions of the structure of the late books of the *Origines*, cf. A. E. Astin, *Cato the Censor* (Oxford 1978) 213–20.

¹³ Serv. A. 1. 126: "nam, ut ait Cato, et in atriis et duobus ferculis epulabantur antiqui"; Bormann relegates this fragment to his list of "quae solo nomine Catonis feruntur, prorsus incerta," fr. hh. Malcovati includes it, with reservations, in the *Dissuasio ne lex Orchia derogaretur* (fr. 144); Janzer (above, note 10) 56, attributes it to the *Carmen de moribus*.

¹⁴ Cato, *HRR* 3 = *Excerpta Rhetorica*, Halm, *Rhet. Lat. min.* p. 588; cf. Liv. 1. pr. 4–5; Sal. *Cat.* 3. 3.

any more rationale for the relevance of his topic or its scope than to make the statement (*Cat.* 4. 2–5) that it is one of the things *memoria digna*. Each of these authors, however, alludes, at least in general terms, to what might be called a *historiae bonum*: that it provides *exempla* both negative and positive (*Liv.* 1. pr. 10) or that in preserving human memories it helps distinguish men from beasts (*Sal. Cat.* 1. 3). The contrast, then, seems to indicate a more general approach by Cato as compared to the more involved and distinct approaches taken by Livy and Sallust. Given the brevity of the prologue to the *De Agricultura*, and the fact that it would quite aptly be said *agriculturae bonum generaliter commendasse*, this is not in any way surprising. The testimonium thus suggests that the prologue to the *Origines* was in general outlines similar to the prologue to the *De Agricultura*.¹⁵

Three elements important for our analysis can be isolated from the prologue to the *De Agricultura*. The first has already been mentioned—that the main assertion is of the general value of agriculture, hinging on the contrast between farming and the two other competing profit-making ventures to show that agriculture is superior to both.¹⁶ The second element, the support of the *maiores*, is adduced to demonstrate the moral superiority of farming over usury.¹⁷ The third element, a pragmatic set of proverbial notions, is introduced to support the practical and moral benefits of farming as contrasted with the risks of commerce.¹⁸

A proverbial statement of a similarly pragmatic notion is attested as having stemmed from the prologue to the *Origines*. Cato paraphrases the opening sentence of Xenophon's *Symposium*: “clarorum virorum atque magnorum non minus otii quam negotii rationem exstare oportere.”¹⁹ Cato means something different from what Xenophon intended the statement to imply. Xenophon claims simply that it is worth remembering what great men do with their leisure time, presumably because it reveals things about them which would not be revealed in any other way. His statement justifies

¹⁵ It is likely that the prologue to the *De Agricultura* was composed prior to that of the *Origines*, or that they were composed at about the same time. The *De Agricultura* was probably begun after 198, and work was apparently still in progress in 164; the *Origines* were underway by 168 and not completed until 149, the year of Cato's death; cf. Astin (above, note 12) 190–91, 212. The suggestion here is not that the two prologues were connected to one another except in the concepts and organizing principles upon which they were based.

¹⁶ *Agr.* pr. 1: “est interdum praestare mercaturis rem quaerere, nisi tam periculosus sit, et item fenerari, si tam honestum sit.”

¹⁷ *Agr.* pr. 1: “maiores nostri sic habuerunt et ita in legibus posiverunt: furem dupli condemnari, feneratorum quadrupli. quanto peiorem civem existimarint feneratorum quam furem hinc licet existimare.”

¹⁸ *Agr.* pr. 4: “at ex agricolis et viri fortissimi et milites strenuissimi gignuntur, maximeque pius quaestus stabilissimusque consequitur minimeque invidiosus, minimeque male cogitantes sunt qui in eo studio occupati sunt.”

¹⁹ Cato, *HRR* 2 = Cic. *Planc.* 66 (context cited below, note 29); cf. Xen. *Symp.* 1. 1: ἀλλ' ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ τῶν καλῶν κάγαθῶν ἀνδρῶν ἔργα οὐ μόνον τὰ μετὰ σπουδῆς πραττόμενα ἀξιωμακόμενα εἶναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ ἐν ταῖς παιδῖαις; cf. K. Münscher, *Xenophon in der griechisch-römischen Literatur*, Philol. Suppl. 13.2 (Leipzig 1920) 71.

his intention to write an account of the leisure activities of several important men. Cato, it will be argued, is not defending the notion of narrating leisure activities (which is not to say that such narratives would not have been part of his history); there is no trace in his history that *otium* ever becomes a dominant theme. Cato uses the balance between *σπουδή* and *παιδιά* to assert the responsibility of an important man to make a use of his leisure time which will stand up to serious scrutiny.²⁰ There is a clear connection between a leisure which stands up to scrutiny and the general assertion of the value of history: The writing of history was a leisure activity. The statement was intended to lead to a justification of the writing of history as a worthy leisure pursuit.

In his article on the *Origines*, Letta makes several assertions which it will be worth while to refute carefully in order to build the argument outlined above. He argues ([above, note 3] 25–30) that Cato did not mean himself when he wrote *clarorum virorum atque magnorum*, but was announcing a historical method which would illustrate the *mores* of *clari maiores atque magni* by narrating how they spent their leisure time, and that he did not mean to include literary endeavor when he wrote *otium*. Neither of these assertions is persuasive.

The argument (Letta 27–29) that Cato in the prologue states a program including the examination of the leisure practices of great historical figures is to be rejected. Letta refers the interpretation of the phrase *clarorum virorum* (he reads *hominum* with Chassignet) *atque magnorum* to Plutarch's τῶν μὲν ἐνδόξων καὶ μεγάλων (*Cat. Mai.* 11. 3), a translation of a phrase which he asserts Cato used with specific reference to the nobility, and thus has special reference to great Roman nobles of history, and does not refer to Cato himself.²¹ It should first be noted that historians are generally in agreement that the incident narrated by Plutarch in the cited passage did not take place.²² Furthermore, it is not clear from the context that Cato was referring exclusively to those who were born into a certain class, but to those who had achieved prominence either by birth or renown. He put himself among the ἀσημότεροι who attempted to outdo those who had advantages τῷ γένει καὶ τῇ δόξῃ. For that matter, Cato may not have written *clarorum virorum atque magnorum*. Dietmar Kienast has argued

²⁰ Cf. Justin. *Epit.* pr. 5: "quod [sc. opus] ad te non tam cognoscendi quam emendandi causa transmissi; simul ut et otii mei, cuius et Cato reddendam operam putat, apud te ratio constaret"; Col. 2. 21. 1; Suet. *Gal.* 9; Symm. *Epist.* 1. 1. 2; T. P. Wiseman, "Practice and Theory in Roman Historiography," in *Roman Studies: Literary and Historical* (Liverpool 1987) 248; G. Garbarino, *Roma e la filosofia greca dalle origini alla fine del II secolo A.C.* (Turin 1973) II 340; W. A. Schröder, *Das Erste Buch der Origines* (Meisenheim am Glan 1971) 53; E. Badian, "The Early Historians," in *Latin Historians*, ed. by T. A. Dorey (New York 1966) 8.

²¹ We should note in passing that Cato, *haud detractor laudum suarum* (Liv. 34. 15. 9), would doubtless not hesitate to number himself, explicitly or implicitly, among the *clari* and *magni* (quite rightly, of course, as he was both).

²² Cf. Astin (above, note 12) 51; A. H. McDonald, "Scipio Africanus and Roman Politics in the Second Century B.C.," *JRS* 28 (1938) 156–57.

that the phrases *clari viri* and *magni viri* are unusual enough in Catonian diction (they are not attested elsewhere) to suggest that Cicero's quotation is imprecise;²³ although the suggestion is not necessarily persuasive, it does remind us that Cicero might have supplied something in the paraphrase which was only implied, or was expressed in slightly different terms, in the original. There is no evidence to support Letta in saying (30): "di fatto, i suoi *clari viri* dovevano figurare come un sinonimo di *maiores* e illustrare la sua visione dei *mores* nazionali in maniera corale."

There is moreover no support from other sources for Letta's assertion that Cato provided a statement of his "programma" (29). There is no indication in the extant fragments of the *Origines* that such a program was executed, which is not to say that we can safely conclude it was not. One might also question the quality and quantity of evidence of leisure activity which would have been available to Cato, at least about people of earlier periods, but this, too, fails *a priori* to invalidate the assumption. There is, however, reason to reject the expectation that, even if such a theme was part of the executed plan of the *Origines*, there would have been any mention of it in the prologue. If there is one thing about the prologue to the *De Agricultura* which has been the subject of scholarly criticism, it is the lack of any clear statement of purpose, scope, or method.²⁴ For the orator who counseled his son (*Ad M. fil.* fr. 15 Jordan, p. 80) *rem tene, verba sequentur*, it may have seemed superfluous (not to say tedious) to state one's method and aims ahead of time in any systematic way, since it would all "come out in the wash," clearly visible for exactly what it was. Cato was content in the prologue to the *De Agricultura* simply to write a few well-chosen words to gain the readers' attention and convince them that what they were about to read was worth while, and then set to the task at hand. Given his reputation for brevity, this is no surprise. One cannot rule out the possibility that the prologue to the *Origines* was more developed in some respects than that of the *De Agricultura*, but Letta's hypothesis is based on assumptions which cannot be corroborated and seem unlikely in the face of existing indications.

Letta's argument that Cato's *otium* cannot include the writing of history also fails to persuade. In his attempt to show that Cato could not have included literary endeavor in his concept of *otium*, Letta makes unsupported claims about the meaning of the word. He asserts, for example (27–28), that Cato's *otium* represents all private engagements, including marriage, reproduction, earning a living, and holding parties, based on the fact that Plutarch (*Cat. Mai.* 16. 2) points out that the Romans believed (it seems to be a truism) that these areas of conduct revealed more about a man than his public acts. The *dictum* of Appius Claudius which

²³ D. Kienast, *Cato der Zensor: Seine Persönlichkeit und seine Zeit* (Heidelberg 1954; repr. Darmstadt 1979) 107. Cicero's paraphrase, at any rate, is not likely to have taken liberties with Cato's meaning, even if he changed the wording.

²⁴ Cf. Astin (above, note 12) 200–01.

Letta cites (28 n. 143) as supportive of the idea that *otium* represents everything outside of the public sphere is rather more clearly in support of the idea that Cato's *otium* represents those activities which are not driven by necessity (Val. Max. 7. 2. 1):

Appium Claudium crebro solitum dicere accepimus negotium populo Romano melius quam otium committi, non quod ignoraret quam iucundus tranquillitatis status esset, sed quod animadverteret praepotentia imperia agitatione rerum ad virtutem capessendam excitari, nimia quiete in desidiam resolvi.

Appius' statement shows that the distinction between *negotium* and *otium* is the difference between *agitatio rerum* (being forced to action) and *nimia quies* (not being required to do anything). Cato's statement about the balance in importance between the *otium* and *negotium* of famous men reflects an attitude which tends to rehabilitate *otium* from being a source of decline and weakness into an additional source of benefit for the society.

Letta further argues that literary activity was excluded from the realm of *otium* during the early second century, but the evidence will not bear him out. He cites Terence's equation of *negotium* with literary endeavor (*Hec.* 25–28). Terence, however, was a professional poet, and thus poetry was his *negotium* (not to mention that the inversion of *otium* and *negotium* at line 26 may have been ironic and intended to amuse the Roman audience). There is no indication that Cato excluded literary endeavor from *otium*, and good evidence that he included it. He implies that he did not approve of poetry as *negotium* in the *Carmen de moribus* (fr. 2 Jordan = Gel. 11. 2. 5), pointing out that those who devoted themselves to poetry were called *grassatores*. According to Plutarch (*Cat. Mai.* 24. 8), writing books and farming were Cato's favorite leisure activities.²⁵ He did most of his writing, as Cugusi (265) points out, during the later years of his life, when he was less busy with *negotia*. Obviously, on the other hand, Cato does not limit the scope of *otium* to literary endeavor or the *vita contemplativa*, since farming is neither.²⁶ *Otium* represents a whole complex of activities outside the public

²⁵ Cf. E. Gruen, *Culture and National Identity in Republican Rome* (Ithaca, NY 1992) 61 n. 69. Letta's refusal ([above, note 3] 28 n. 140) to credit Plutarch's statement would be more credible if there were actually a statement in Cicero's *De Senectute* which Plutarch was quoting directly, though even then it would depend upon the presumption that Cicero's portrayal of Cato was significantly distorted. If Cato did not write books in his leisure time, it is hard to imagine when he did write them, and if he did not enjoy it, it is hard to imagine why he wrote them; cf. Cugusi (above, note 3) 265. Letta's further claim (*ibid.*) that Xenophon's παιδιὰ does not include literary activity, requires the assumption that Cato's use of the passage was faithful to Xenophon's original intent, which is certainly not necessary, and that his understanding of cultural matters was the same as Xenophon's, which is doubtful. The Rome of the second century B.C.E. was a very different place from the Athens of the fifth and fourth centuries.

²⁶ L. Alfonsi, "Catone il Censore e l'umanesimo romano," *PP* 9 (1954) 165. J.-M. André, *L'otium dans la vie morale et intellectuelle romaine* (Paris 1966) 46, suggests that Cato was furtively the founder of the *otium litteratum*; Gruen (previous note) 61, derives from Cato's equation of *otium* and *negotium* the combination of the *vita contemplativa* with the *vita activa*.

sphere and outside the exigencies of making a living, including writing books and, for a man who need not work for a living, managing a farm.²⁷ Letta's attempt to exclude literary endeavor from *otium* does not hold up.

On the other hand, the productive use of leisure is a recurrent theme in Roman literature. Sallust, as part of his accounting for his own choice in taking up the task of writing history, claims that the Roman state will derive considerable benefit from his leisure (*Iug.* 4. 4):

qui si reputaverint et quibus ego temporibus magistratus adeptus sim et quales viri idem adsequi nequiverint et postea quae genera hominum in senatum pervenerint, profecto existumabunt me magis merito quam ignavia iudicium animi mei mutavisse maiusque commodum ex otio meo quam ex aliorum negotiis rei publicae venturum.

In a larger context which will receive closer treatment presently—the prologue to Book 1 of the *Tusculan Disputations*—Cicero (*Tusc.* 1. 5) paraphrases the same notion in defending his use of leisure time to write philosophy in Latin: “illustranda et excitanda nobis est [*sc.* philosophia] ut, si occupati profuimus aliquid civibus nostris, prosimus etiam, si possumus, otiosi.” The idea is attested as having derived from Cato. Justinus certainly refers to this fragment when he writes that he wanted his work to be examined in part in order to supply an account of how he himself has used his leisure time, “cuius et Cato reddendam operam putat.”²⁸ In the passage in which fragment 2 of the *Origines* is quoted, Cicero uses the Catonian *dictum* to illustrate the motivation behind his practice of using his *otium* in a publicly productive way.²⁹

Letta's point ([above, note 3] 29) that Cato did not offer a specific explanation of his personal choice to write history is well made, but he takes it too far. Cato does not refer to himself personally in the extant fragments of the prologue, and it is probably safe to assume that he made no specific reference to himself elsewhere in the prologue (as he does not in the prologue to the *De Agricultura*). This does not rule out a general reference to the usefulness of leisure, and there are many indications, which will be illustrated presently, that this is precisely the point of departure of the passage. The only reasonable conclusion is that he asserts in fragment 2 that important men should be ready to be called to account for their use of leisure time, and leaves it to be implied, as he goes on to justify the writing

²⁷ The point, of course, is not that Cato did not either need or want the income from a farm, but that his constant personal efforts were not necessary to its functioning.

²⁸ Cited above, note 20.

²⁹ Cic. *Planc.* 66: “ecquid ego dicam de occupatis meis temporibus, cui fuerit ne otium quidem umquam otiosum? nam quas tu commemoras, Cassi, legere te solere orationes, cum otiosus sis, has ego scripsi ludis et feriis, ne omnino umquam essem otiosus. etenim M. Catonis illud, quod in principio scripsit Originum suarum, semper magnificum et praeclarum putavi, clarorum virorum atque magnorum e.q.s.”

of history in leisure time, that this use of his leisure time is useful and may be counted to the good.

The first fragment of the prologue to the *Origines* lends further support to the idea that justifying the leisure pursuit of writing history was a prominent element in the prologue as a whole. On this point Letta is also of a different opinion, suggesting (29) that as part of the programmatic outline it indicates that Cato will bring prose history into the mix. Fragment 1 of the *Origines*, however, is not clearly to be associated specifically with prose history: “si quæ homines sunt quos delectat populi Romani gesta describere.”³⁰ What is notably attested in the fragment is the idea that pleasure (*delectat*) has a role in the writing of history. Even if there were not another fragment attested which mentioned *otium*, this phraseology would suggest that the writing of history is conceived of as the task of an amateur (in the truest sense of the word). Like the other acts which come under the rubric of *otium*, the writing of history is not motivated as much by necessity as by desire and inclination. There is no need to look any further for a connection between the two extant fragments of the prologue to the *Origines*; history as the task of an amateur dovetails with the assertion that *otium*—that time which can be devoted to amateurism—should be useful.

Before we move on to consider the way these lines of reasoning will tend to support the inclusion of fragment 118 among the fragments of the prologue, it will be useful to take the analysis of fragment 1 one step further and suggest that it subtly announces a break with the established poetic historical tradition at Rome. As was suggested in the previous paragraph, Letta’s assertion (29) that the *populi Romani gesta* refer to prose history neglects the fact that when Cato wrote those words, there were no Latin prose works on that subject. The only Latin literature on the accomplishments of the Roman people were the saturnians of Naevius and the hexameters of Ennius. There were also the Greek prose histories of Fabius Pictor and Postumius Albinus. If *populi Romani gesta* calls any prior literature to mind, it is not Latin prose, but either Greek prose or Latin poetry. There is reason to suggest that the fragment is subtly pointed at the latter.

The opening sentence of the *Origines* is probably hexametrical. Luca Cardinali argues that *homines* is a gloss which should be removed to yield a spondaic hexameter.³¹ If, however, *homines* is placed after *sunt* as by pseudo-Sergius, the line is still hexametrical to a point: “Si quæ sunt homines quos delectat populi Ro-.”³² The fact that the hexametrical scheme

³⁰ Pompeius, *Comm. in Art. Donat.* 18 = *GL* V 208; cf. ps.-Serg. *Expl. Art. Donat.* 1 = *GL* IV 502: “Cato quoque Origines sic inchoat, si quæ sunt homines”; Serv. A. 1. 95: “denique Cato in Originibus ait si quæ sunt populi.”

³¹ L. Cardinali, “Le *Origines* di Catone iniziavano con un esametro?” *SCO* 37 (1988) 205–15.

³² The fact that two of the three sources (cited above, note 30) quote the words *si quæ sunt* without a break between them tends to support this reading, which was suggested to me by

breaks down is perhaps more suggestive than problematical. Cato is not writing poetry, but he does acknowledge the poetic tradition which has preceded him in his own language. He was not averse to using poetic elements from the Latin tradition in his work.³³ By beginning with a broken hexameter, he reminds the reader of the poetic tradition, and signals that his work will be somewhat different. The possibility that Cato supplied a precedent may open the door to a fresh look at the vexing controversy over the putative hexameters beginning Livy and Tacitus' *Annals*. It is not prudent to reject the testimony of Quintilian, who tells us that Livy's phraseology was hexametrical, even though the extant manuscripts are in agreement in reading "facturusne sim operae pretium."³⁴ The form of the opening of Tacitus' *Annals* is not in dispute, but it is unclear whether it would have been seen as a hexameter by Tacitus or his contemporaries: "urbem Romam a principio reges habuere."³⁵ It is a difficult question, but there are hexameter verses written by skilled poets which are very similar in many respects.³⁶

David Sansone. In Servius, it appears that the several words between *sunt* and *populi* simply dropped out of the text.

³³ R. Till, *Die Sprache Catos*, Philol. Suppl. 18.2 (Leipzig 1935) 15–21.

³⁴ Quint. *Inst.* 9. 4. 74: "T. Livius hexametri exordio coepit: facturusne operae pretium sim; nam ita edidit estque melius quam modo emendatur." Quintilian's wording suggests that he had reason to believe that this was the genuine form of the original work (*edidit*) and that a later editor or editors had decided to change the form as he had found it (*emendatur*), apparently under an impression at variance with Quintilian's. Of course, the reading of the surviving mss. requires only one ancient editor to have made that decision.

³⁵ Cf. E. Koestermann (ed.), *Cornelius Tacitus. Annalen* (Heidelberg 1963) I 56; E. Norden, *Ennius und Vergilius* (Leipzig 1915) 54 n. 1; F. Leo, "Die staatsrechtlichen Excursus in Tacitus' Annalen," *NAWG* (1896) 191 n. 1 = *Ausgewählte kleine Schriften* (Rome 1960) II 299 n. 1; V. Lundström, "Nya Enniusfragment," *Eranos* 15 (1915) 8–11.

³⁶ The caesura in the fifth foot, and the jarring lack of coincidence of word accent and ictus, find a parallel in Ennius (*Ann.* 43): "corde capessere; semita nulla pedem stabilibat." Another case of a glaring lack of coincidence in ictus and accent is found in Juvenal (7. 238): "ut si quis cera voltum facit; exigit ut sit." The lack of caesura in the third foot may be regarded as slightly irregular, but not unheard-of, as Juvenal writes (15. 81): "victrix turba nec ardentis decoxit aeno," and Vergil writes (*Aen.* 2. 606): "caligat, nubem eripiam; tu ne qua parentes."

There are more parallels to be adduced, but this is not the place for the argument. Suffice it to say that the first words of the *Annals* of Tacitus might not have rung hexametrical to the ear of a Roman, but if they did not, there may be several actual lines of hexameter which might also not have rung hexametrical. It is safer to conclude that the first words of the *Annals* sounded vaguely like a hexameter. There are indications that poetic sequences, even if somewhat unusual or even fundamentally flawed, would have been noticeable and even jarring to a listening audience. In cautioning the orator against an excessive poetic element in his rhetoric, Cicero writes (*De Or.* 3. 182) that one must avoid "the poetic line or the likeness of a poetic line" (*versum aut similitudinem versus*). The phrase *similitudo versus* presumes that a string of syllables which is not technically a *versus* can, nevertheless, sound like one. A writer who accidentally falls into extended poetic rhythms might simply be holding himself to a different standard, but arguably the place where one would least expect to find a possibly jarring coincidence is in the first sentence of a *magnum opus*. Such an identical accident in several authors' *magna opera* seems unlikely. None of this, of course, rules out a simple coincidence, but as we have seen, there is a reasonable explanation for why Cato would have consciously constructed his sentence this way, and that might be explanation enough why two later historians would have done the same thing. Tacitus alludes to Cato's *Origines* in the prologue to the *Agricola*, and might just as well have had Cato, next to Sallust, in mind when

At any rate, as we have seen, two of the three major thematic elements identified from the prologue to the *De Agricultura* are explicitly attested in the prologue to the *Origines*: the general purpose to assert the value of the operative endeavor, and a proverbial statement encompassing or enabling a justification of that endeavor. The only element missing from the extant fragments of the *Origines* is any overt reference to the practices of the *maiores*, which, for Cato, would supply ample precedent for virtually anything which was suitable for other reasons.³⁷ Intuitively, one almost expects to find a reference to the *maiores* on any question in which such a reference is possible. Such an element is, of course, to be found in fragment 118. The Latin-speaking *maiores* used historical discourse in their leisure time, presumably for the edification and education of their peers and families.³⁸ If the legal precedents set by the *maiores* demonstrate the evils of usury and, in contrast to them, the virtues of agriculture (*Agr. pr. 1*), the practice of telling the virtues and accomplishments of great men after dinner among the *maiores* will provide at least as fundamental support for the Roman who chooses to write in Latin about the development of the Roman state.

Furthermore, since the fragment speaks about a quasi-historical leisure practice of the *maiores*, it fits in with the most probable reconstruction of the succession of ideas in the first few sentences of the prologue itself. We have seen that in fragment 1 history is cast as the task of an amateur. The importance of leisure time, which encompasses the activities of the amateur, comes to the fore in fragment 2. That the *maiores* used their leisure time in a quasi-historical pursuit tends naturally to complete the thoughts begun independently in the two extant fragments of the prologue. Moreover, this practice of the *maiores* also tends to support the value of history, the assertion of which is fundamental to the prologue, in just the same way that the importance of agriculture was supported by the alleged tendency of the *maiores* to reserve as their highest compliment the bestowal of the title of "a good farmer and a good homesteader" (*Agr. pr. 2: bonum agricolam bonumque colonum*). Finally, beside the subtle "announcement" in the first sentence of a break with the Roman poetic tradition, the practice of "history" by Roman *maiores* announces a break with the prose histories

he sat down to compose the *Annals*. Of those many histories whose openings do not survive, we can, of course, say nothing. It is noteworthy, however, that the opening words of the narrative of Sallust's *Bellum Iugurthinum* (5. 1) form a spondaic hexameter: "bellum scripturus sum quod populi Romani." When in the *Coniuratio Catilinae* he begins his narrative of the beginnings of Rome, he also strings together several syllables in a hexametrical scheme, though again an undeniably atypical one (*Cat. 6. 1*): "urbem Romam, sicuti ego accepi." Opinions on this matter have been, and doubtless will remain, divided, but the notion that there is a topos of some limited scope at work here cannot be summarily dismissed.

³⁷ To the evidence already quoted from the prologue to the *De Agricultura*, add the arguments in speeches which refer to the practices of the *maiores* as persuasive precedents: Cato, fr. 58, 206 M.

³⁸ Cf. Letta (above, note 3) 30; Astin (above, note 12) 222.

written in Greek by Romans. Subtly, Cato hints at a greater authenticity to his history by tying it to the language and practice of the *maiores*. Fragment 118 fits the paradigm of a Catonian prologue, despite Jordan's protestation. There is, however, even more collateral support for the hypothesis that it belongs to the prologue.

Two of the three citations in Cicero of fragment 118 of the *Origines* fall in prologues, and Tacitus echoes the sentiment in a prologue as well.³⁹ Tacitus begins the *Agricola* (1. 1): "clarorum virorum facta moresque posteris tradere, antiquitus usitatum . . ." R. M. Ogilvie and Ian Richmond, in their edition of the *Agricola* (Oxford 1967), want to demonstrate that Tacitus' *clarorum virorum* paralleled the "opening words" of the *Origines* (HRR 2), and, at the same time, fragment 118.⁴⁰ Letta ([above, note 3] 26) tries to advance the argument that fragment 118 belongs to the prologue solely on the basis of the parallel construction between the two fragments and Tacitus' allusion (HRR 2, 118; Tac. Agr. 1), separating the public side (*negotium-facta-laudes*) from the private side (*otium-virtutes-mores*). The argument is procrustean.⁴¹ Schröder, in his comment on fr. 1. 2 (= HRR 2) of the *Origines*, is rightly skeptical of such complex connections:

... die anderen von Ogilvie-Richmond angeführten Parallelen für taciteische Entlehnungen aus den Werken von Vorgängern sind anderer Art: Eine Kombination zweier Stellen wäre singulär.

There is an understandable, and perhaps justified, temptation to look for the allusion of Tacitus' prologue to have been drawn from a prologue, but it is not reasonable to connect it to fragment 2.⁴² There is no particular echo of the opening words of the *Origines*, since the first words of the *Origines* were apparently *si quae sunt*. Furthermore, the manuscripts of the *Pro Plancio* do not make it clear whether the text of fragment 2 should read *clarorum virorum* or *clarorum hominum*. As Bertil Wijkström has shown, however, Tacitus' allusion is clearly connected to fragment 118, where both the *clarorum virorum* and the *facta moresque* are paralleled—by *clarorum virorum* and *laudes atque virtutes*, respectively.⁴³ Tacitus' allusion, then, lends additional support to the idea that fragment 118 is from the prologue.

Cicero's use of fragment 118 of the *Origines* suggests that it is from a prologue which tended to justify literary endeavor in Latin. Two of Cicero's three paraphrases of the fragment are from the prologues to Books

³⁹ The number of allusions to the passage can also suggest, but only suggest, that it was from the prologue rather than buried in the narrative of a legal controversy or the like.

⁴⁰ In their comment (p. 126 of their edition), they make the error of citing Cato, HRR 2 as fr. 1. Their reasoning seems to follow from this error.

⁴¹ Cf. Gruen (above, note 25) 61 n. 69.

⁴² Despite C. W. Mendell, "Literary Reminiscences in the *Agricola*," TAPA 52 (1921) 56.

⁴³ B. Wijkström, "Clarorum Virorum Facta Moresque . . .," in *Apophoreta Gotoburgensia Vilelmo Lundström Oblata* (Göteborg 1936) 167; Schröder (above, note 20) ad loc., follows Wijkström.

1 and 4 of the *Tusculan Disputations*. The first one will occupy our attention, as Cicero uses it to help make his argument that Roman writers and Latin literature are not inferior to their Greek counterparts. The structure of a portion of Cicero's argument pivots around Cato, and, if fragment 118 is from the prologue to the *Origines*, the argument is bracketed by subtle allusions to that prologue. The argument begins and ends with anonymous paraphrases from Cato's prologue (again on the operating assumption that fragment 118 stems from the prologue), and in the sentence following and preceding the beginning and ending paraphrase, respectively, Cato is named explicitly in his capacity as an orator. Cicero writes (*Tusc.* 1. 3):

quamquam est in Originibus solitos esse in epulis canere convivas ad tibicinem de clarorum hominum virtutibus; honorem tamen huic generi non fuisse declarat oratio Catonis, in qua obiecit ut probrum M. Nobiliori quod is in provinciam poetas duxisset.

Cicero goes on to argue the point that it was lack of *honos* which prevented the flowering of the arts, and not a lack of native ability or talent. His use of both fragments is independent of Cato's. Cicero considers the quotation from Cato to be widely known, since the only reason he is compelled to bring it up is to dismiss the idea, presumably based on this fragment alone, that poetry had a legitimate place among the Romans of bygone days. These arguments, contemporary with Cicero, did not necessarily have anything at all to do with Cato's original meaning. Cicero, however, uses Cato as a fortuitous point of departure for his argument, since Cato the orator also supplies Cicero's evidence that the Romans of his day did not consider poetry worthy of *honos*.⁴⁴ Cato then occupies the pivotal place in Cicero's argument (*Tusc.* 1. 5) that the Romans were, on the other hand, natural orators, and accorded oratory a value which caused it to thrive among them.⁴⁵ This statement is followed immediately by a concluding sentence which incorporates a paraphrase from Cato's prologue, with no overt reference either to that work or to the author (*Tusc.* 1. 5):

philosophia iacuit usque ad hanc aetatem nec ullum habuit lumen litterarum Latinarum, quae inlustranda et excitanda nobis est ut, si occupati profuimus aliquid civibus nostris, prosimus etiam, si possumus, otiosi.

⁴⁴ Cicero's argument on this point might also be anachronistic. Cato's criticism of Nobilior was more basic than the fact that he associated himself with poets; the argument can be made (though here is not the appropriate place) that Cato's objection was that Nobilior's entourage of poets indicated an excessively self-interested approach to provincial administration.

⁴⁵ Cato stands alone at the pivotal point in the period, with a relative clause attached to his name, between two lists of three names each: "at contra oratorem celeriter complexi sumus, nec eum primo eruditum, aptum tamen ad dicendum, post autem eruditum. nam Galbam, Africanum, Laelium doctos fuisse traditum est, studiosum autem eum, qui iis aetate anteibat, Catonem, post vero Lepidum, Carbonem, Gracchos, inde ita magnos nostram ad aetatem, ut non multum aut nihil omnino Graecis cederetur."

Cicero uses Cato to illustrate the Romans' ability to engage in any literary endeavor they valued as useful and worth while. Cato does not seem to have made this point explicitly in his prologue, so Cicero is not imitating Cato. On the other hand, Cato's prologue is likely to have implied a break with Latin poetry and Greek prose, as we have seen, and to have used the content of fragment 118 to justify the value of history as the leisure practice of an amateur. Cicero begins a prominent argument in his prologue with the acknowledgement, from the prologue to the *Origines* (as is being argued), that there was a quasi-poetic, quasi-historical tradition in Rome in a bygone era, and he ends it with a statement that he intends to adhere to the assertion, developed from the same prologue, that leisure ought to be productive. Both of these ideas were well known and attributed to Cato.⁴⁶ If both of them were from the prologue to the *Origines*, that, too, was probably well known. It would not escape the notice of a careful reader that Cicero's relatively brief argument began and ended in the prologue to Cato's *Origines*, the first preface to a literary work of Latin prose. Even though Cato's prologue (probably) did not assert the suitability of Latin (as opposed to Greek) for prose writing, it certainly did provide a precedent for it, in the same way that Cato's *maiores* provided a precedent for him to write history in his leisure time. Cato was blazing new trails, as was Cicero. They were blazing trails at different levels of literary production, and their techniques were different in subtle but important ways, but a clever allusion to Cicero's ultimate predecessor would doubtless have elicited a knowing smile from a like-minded Roman who believed that a Roman was no less talented by nature than a Greek, and that Cato was a fine example to use to support that assertion.

Roth's placement of fragment 118 was sound. The structure and content of the fragments of the prologue to the *Origines* are similar to the intact prologue to the *De Agricultura*.⁴⁷ Three of the four literary

⁴⁶ Cf. above, pp. 96 and 99 with notes 20 and 29.

⁴⁷ Cugusi (above, note 3) 267–72 includes two other fragments (Cic. *Off.* 3. 1, *Rep.* 2. 1) in the prologue to the *Origines*, in both cases because he sees them as fitting with or elaborating upon elements present in the other fragments we have discussed. His reconstruction (270) of the prologue, based on the five fragments, is interesting, but there is no way to be confident, much less sure, that the fragments he uses to fill out the reconstruction were actually part of the prologue. The first, from the *De Officiis* (3.1), simply echoes in a different sense Cato's quote (*HRR* 2) from Xenophon: "Scipionem, . . . qui primus Africanus appellatus est, dicere solitum scripsit Cato . . . numquam se minus otiosum esse, quam cum otiosus, nec minus solum, quam cum solus esset." The quotation would add very little to Cato's point besides the authority of Africanus, which, we will argue in another forum, was probably not the kind of authority Cato would ordinarily rely on. It will serve here simply to remark that Cugusi's suggestion (268) that Cato cited Africanus, if at all, in "termini lusinghieri" begs the question whether Cato, who was accustomed to barking at Scipio's greatness, according to Livy (38. 54. 1; certainly a rhetorical elaboration, but it does seem that there was significant hostility between the two toward the end of Africanus' life, and precisely the kind of hostility which would indicate that Cato did not think Africanus was worthy of any special consideration; cf. Astin [above, note 12] 70–73), would have elevated Scipio to the status of an *exemplum* on a par with the *maiores*, especially if it was a certain lack of respect for the authority of a name which motivated Cato to

paraphrases of the fragment occur in prologues. Cicero's prologue to the first book of the *Tusculan Disputations* demonstrates an intricate construction which also suggests that the fragment is from the prologue to the *Origines*. Analyses of the structure, content, and style of the *Origines* must rest on the realization that Jordan erred when he assumed that Cato was not likely to have used fragment 118 in the way Roth's attribution suggested. The fact is that we need look no further than another prologue written by Cato to discover parallels for exactly the kind of *instrumentum criticae artis* Jordan accuses Roth of foolishly attributing to Cato. So pivotal a figure in the origin and development of Latin prose literature deserves more consideration than Jordan accorded him in this case.

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omit names of leading men in the text of the *Origines* (cf. Astin 232–33). If the Scipionic *dictum* is included in the prologue, it occasions some uncomfortable questions, and yet changes nothing else materially in terms of either content or structure; a discussion of its implications is virtually moot. The second fragment—the assertion from Cicero's *Republic* (2. 1) that Cato saw the Roman state's superiority from the perspective that it had been built not by one man in one lifetime, but by the collective effort and genius of the Roman people over the centuries—contains an admittedly provocative idea which may well have played a significant role, implicitly or explicitly, in the *Origines* as a whole, but which we cannot even say was *ipso facto* likely to have found its way into the prologue (cf. Astin 225–26; as we have earlier asked, why should we expect the prologue to the *Origines* to be any more “programmatic” than that to the *De Agricultura*?); we are in danger of writing the prologue for Cato, unless we can find some independent indication (such as we have for HRR 118) that it belongs here. Such speculation is not necessary. We can be conservative, stick to the evidence at hand, and not be left without direction in our desire to understand the prologue. As we have seen, there is no need to go much beyond the two attested fragments and HRR 118, in comparison with the prologue to the *De Agricultura*, to find a satisfying and plausible picture, at least in rough outline, of what the prologue almost certainly contained and how it was most probably used.