

2 Cato *Origines* F 113 P. – Female Dress in Public Discourse about Luxury in the Second Century BCE

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2.1 Introduction

The only prose text from Pre-Classical Latin literature dealing with clothing of Roman women is an excerpt from the *Origines* of Cato the censor (234–149 BCE). Not to mislead the historians among the readers, it must be said first that this chapter, like the preceding one, will mainly deal with textual criticism and philological intricacies. Historical issues will only be touched on at the end (without ultimately coming to a straightforward solution).

The short fragment of Cato's *Origines* concerning female dress has come down to us in very corrupt form in the dictionary of Festus (Verrius) and contains three glosses (**arsinea*, **rusceus*, **galbeus*). It has been edited many times in editions of Festus, Cato, and the ancient Roman historians. After bold beginnings (Joseph Scaliger [1565]; Popma [1620]) a gradual loss of editorial courage can be perceived, as well as a self-contentedness as to understanding a difficult text.¹ Recently, it has even been maintained that Cato does not describe a Roman, but an odd Spanish female garb.² Indeed, exotic **arsinea* on the head, belts coloured like a butcher's broom, linen armbands (**galbei*), and animal skins (*pelles*) all make for a very folkloric outfit.

¹ Progress in matters of textual criticism is confined to the oldest editions: Joseph Scaliger (1565): *arsinea*, *rete* ... *russeas fascias* (in the *Castigationes* p. 168); Popma (1620): *pallas*. See also Karl Otfried Müller (1839) Festus p. 262.31–263.3 *galbeas lineas*; Lindsay (1913) p. 320.17–23; Cato Orig. F 7.8 Jordan (1860) *galbeos lineos*; F 113 Peter; F 7.9 Chassignet (1984); F 128 Cugusi (1996); F 7.9 Beck/Walter (2005); F 109 Cornell (2015). The last edition contains errors in the text, in the critical apparatus, and in the translation.

² M. T. Sblendorio Cugusi/P. Cugusi, *Problematica catoniana*, *Bollettino di Studi Latini* 24 (1996), 99: "e si occupò non solo del lusso delle donne di Roma: infatti in orig. frg. 113 P², egli denuncia il lusso

But did the clothes of the women described by Cato really look like this? This chapter contradicts the theory that the fragment is about a special Spanish costume. It argues instead that the female garments we read about are completely in tune with what we hear about Roman female clothing elsewhere. Cato's supposedly Spanish women will turn out to be rich Roman matrons wearing precious headdresses and coloured robes.³ Due to the corruption of the fragment, it will take much energy to extract this sense from beneath centuries of errors. As with the Twelve Tables (A 1), the investigation will again be undertaken in two steps.

In general, one has to distinguish between the author Festus and the author Cato. We will thus first try to find out what Festus wrote and then think about what Cato himself might have written. As to textual criticism, this implies that we first have to correct the mistakes in our text of Festus and then the mistakes in Festus' text of Cato. As in case of the Twelve Tables, the conclusion will be that already Festus' text of Cato suffered from textual corruption, containing some misspellings, and that the strange glosses mentioned above go all the way back to Festus and did not simply occur over successive centuries.

The *Origines* of Cato have always received much attention in modern research and are part of the general knowledge of ancient literary history.⁴ A few remarks may therefore suffice to describe them. They are the first historical work known to us to have been written in the Latin language. Cato may have started to write them in about 170 BCE; at the time of his death in 149 BCE they had grown to seven books.⁵ The first traces of them, however, we find only about hundred years later, in Cicero and Nepos, then in Sallust, who venerated Cato as *Romani generis disertissimus* (most eloquent Roman).⁶ The early history of the text of the *Origines*, like that of the other early Roman historians, therefore remains in the dark.⁷ We have no evidence about how the work was published

delle donne ispaniche, fornendo una precisa testimonianza di coerenza comportamentale al di sopra di fatti o circostanze contingenti"; Cornell II (n. 4) 140.

³ Against G. Perl/I. El-Qalqili, Zur Problematik der lex Oppia (215/195 v. Chr.), *Klio* 84 (2002), 418. According to them, colourful clothing was inappropriate for Roman matrons. This was certainly the view held by Cato, too. In reality, Roman everyday clothing was, as Cato's criticism shows, variegated.

⁴ Research reports: Cugusi/Sblendorio Cugusi (n. 2) 82–88; id., Catone. opere, vol. II, Torino 2001; W. Suerbaum, Cato Censorius in der Forschung des 20. Jahrhunderts. Eine kommentierte chronologische Bibliographie für 1900–1999 nebst systematischen Hinweisen und einer Darstellung des Schriftstellers M. Porcius Cato (234–149 v. Chr.), Hildesheim 2004; general introductions e.g. F. Leo, Geschichte der römischen Literatur, Berlin 1913, 290–300; W. Suerbaum, art. Cato, in: W. Suerbaum (ed.), Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur der Antike, 1. Band. Die Archaische Literatur von den Anfängen bis Sullas Tod. Die vorliterarische Periode und die Zeit von 240 bis 78 v. Chr. (HAW VIII 1), Munich 2002, 380–418; H. Beck/U. Walter, Die frühen römischen Historiker, Darmstadt 2005, 148–154; T. J. Cornell, The Fragments of the Roman Historians, Oxford 2015, vol. I, 191–218.

⁵ On the dating, see Suerbaum (n. 4) 389–390.

⁶ Sallust. hist. F 4 M.

⁷ This is probably the reason why the circumstances of its transmission are mostly ignored by modern research.

at a time when the book trade in Rome was still in its infancy,⁸ how it was distributed, by whom it was read, nor how it survived in the period before becoming a classic. We can only use guesswork based on analogies and try to answer these questions. The literary character of the *Origines* suggests that, unlike Cato's writings *ad Marcum filium*, they were perhaps not only written for Cato's own household but were also intended for a broader public.⁹ Private copies based on one another in a kind of 'snowball system' may have played a major part in the spread and eventual corruption of the text. At the beginning, when the work was still new, other members of the social elite may have comprised its readership although Cato intentionally tried to upset them by not mentioning their names, but the name of an elephant instead.¹⁰

Afterwards, when the *Origines* became a classic of early Roman literature, educated people may have read them—although they probably preferred Polybios writing in Greek—as well as professional grammarians. At least with this last group of readers, the *Origines* might have always been popular. They liked the work because it offered old word forms, an occasionally idiosyncratic syntax, and, above all, words in need of explanation (i.e. glosses): every ambitious grammarian's dream! In summary, it can be said that however we may think about its early transmission, Cato's text may have been far more unstable and prone to errors than, for example, the text of the works of Cicero and Virgil.

2.2 Festus' version of Cato F 113 P.

Festus quotes the fragment from Cato as early evidence for the word thorn bush (*ruscus* or *ruscum*).¹¹ He also refers, as he sometimes does, to the grammarian Verrius, whose extensive dictionary (called *De significatu verborum*) was epitomized by Festus in his own work. According to Festus (Verrius), the adjective **rusceus*, a hapax legomenon, derives from **ruscus* and serves to indicate a specific colour:

Festus p. 320.17–23 L.

ruscum est, ut ait Verrius, amplius paullo herba et exilius virgultis fruticibusque, non dissimile iunco; cuius coloris rebus uti mulieres solitas commemorat Cato Originum lib. VII:

The butcher's broom (*ruscus*) is, as Verrius says, a bit larger than an herb and smaller than bushes and shrubs, not unlike the rush (*iuncus*). Women used to wear things in its colour, as Cato says in the seventh book of the *Origines*.

⁸ F. Kleberg, *Buchhandel und Verlagswesen in der Antike*, Darmstadt 1967, 22–23; DNP 2 (1997) s.v. Buch, col. 813 (Carmassa/Hild).

⁹ Leo (n. 4) 290; most recently Cornell I (n. 4) 196–198.

¹⁰ Cato F 88 Peter (= 4.11 Beck/Walter).

¹¹ On Festus and Verrius in general, cf. D 1 pp. 588–589; D 5 pp. 643–647.

The verbatim quotation from Cato's *Origines* follows the remarks of Festus which it is supposed to prove. Some words in the transmitted text are clearly corrupted or of doubtful sense. In the manuscripts it reads as follows:

mulieres opertae auro purpuraque ars inheret diadema coronas aureas ruscea facile galbeos lineas pelles redimicula.

(for a translation see below)

2.2.1 *ars inheret* < *arsinea ret<icula>*

As Joseph Scaliger (1565) already recognized, a gloss is hidden under the meaningless words *ars inheret* that caused Festus to create another lemma in his dictionary. Paulus Diaconus (19.7 L.) gives us what is left of the original entry in Festus: *arsineum: ornamentum capitis mulieris* (an **arsineum* is a female headdress).¹² In his *Castigationes*, Scaliger therefore suggested restoring the expression **arsinea ret<e>*, without putting it into his text of Festus.¹³ His emendation was successful in the case of **arsinea*. As is obvious, it corrupted to the hardly translatable *ars inheret* by a simple error concerning word division. Scaliger's suggestion *ret<e>*, however, does not hit the mark, although it was universally adopted by later editors.

On the one hand, the word *rete* does not refer to a hairnet as Scaliger and the other editors supposed it does.¹⁴ On the other hand, we would expect a plural, as is used in case of most other things listed by Cato in the same passage. Both difficulties are removed if we read *ret<icula>* instead, which gives us both the common word for the hairnet (*reticulum*) (B 12) and the required plural (*reticula*). The letters after RET may have fallen victim to abbreviation or haplography. A similar thing seems to have happened in case of the following word *diadema*. Here too the plural *diadema <ta>* is required.

2.2.2 **rusceas facile* < *russeas fasciolas*

In the case of *facile*, Scaliger's genius has also pointed in the right direction. He emended it to *fascias*.¹⁵ Instead of *fascias*, however, which most of the later editors have put into the text, we should restore the diminutive form *fasciolas*. As to paleography, the diminutive shows well how the mistake could have again originated out of

¹² In Lindsay's edition, a mistype in the word *arsineum* needs to be corrected.

¹³ Scaliger (1565) 263.

¹⁴ One should beware of a circular argument. Scaliger's conjecture is the only reference for the meaning 'hairnet' in OLD s.v. *rete* 2 b.

¹⁵ Scaliger (1565) 263.

an abbreviation or a shorthand of *fa(s)ci(o)le(s)*. As in Apuleius,¹⁶ the term *fasciola* designates a breastband *fascia* (B 22). Maybe, Cato used the diminutive to stress the triviality of this article of dress. Since the preceding adjective **rusceas* must qualify *fasciolas*, its ending should also be changed to the accusative plural.

2.2.3 *galbeos lineas pelles* < *galbeos lineas pallas*

The meaning of the sequence *galbeos lineas pelles* also causes some difficulty. The word **galbeus* (adj.) or **galbeum* (noun), variously spelled with the letter G or C at the beginning,¹⁷ is a hapax as regards primary sources. It is explained by Festus in two other places in his dictionary.¹⁸ Again, we only have the version of Paulus Diaconus:¹⁹ *galbeum ornamenti genus* (The **galbeum* is a kind of ornament), and *calbeos* [!] *armillas dicebant, quibus triumphantes utebantur et quibus ob virtutem milites donabantur* (**calbei* was a name for bracelets (*armillae*) worn in triumph and awarded to soldiers for their courage). The two entries belong together and indicate how uncertain the lexicographers were about the grammatical gender and the meaning of the word. In any case, the **galbeum* or **calbeus* was a gloss that had to be explained.

In theory, the form *lineas* could be the accusative of the noun *linea*, but a string is meaningless in the context of the luxury of female dress.²⁰ We should therefore think of the adjective *lineus* (made of linen). Since this cannot refer to the following word *pelles* (animal skins), editors have combined it with the preceding *galbeos* and changed the text accordingly. Thus Jordan (1860) restores *galbeos lineos*; in the critical apparatus (in the text he leaves it at a crux), Müller (1839) proposes *galbeas lineas*.²¹ However, triumphal bracelets (*armillae*) made of linen are hard to believe.²² It is also surprising that Festus did not add a reference to linen in his definition of the **galbeus*. A look to the following *pelles* might solve the dilemma. The word *pelles*, which denotes animal skins, is meaningful in itself, but it should be kept in mind that in antiquity, unlike in modern

¹⁶ Apul. Met. 2.7; cf. also B 1 pp. 275–276.

¹⁷ The difference in spelling does not matter. As is well known, up to the 3rd century BCE the phoneme G was expressed by the letter C. Afterwards, C and G are also often mixed up in the transmission.

¹⁸ The word is also used once by the grammarian (and dress specialist) Suetonius (Galb. 3.1). This, however, does not prove that it was used in everyday language. Suetonius is adducing some grammarian's guesses about the etymology of the name of the Emperor Galba. One of this was based on the gloss **galbeus* that had to be explained to the general reader: *quod in diuturna valitudine galbeo, id est remediis lana involutis, adsidue uteretur* [(he was called Galba) because in a long illness he regularly used a **galbeus*, that is a woollen pharmaceutical compress].

¹⁹ Paulus p. 85.12 L. and p. 41.2–3 L.

²⁰ Against Scaliger and ThLL VII s.v. *linea* col. 1431.7–59: *in ornamento muliebri fere i.q. monile*.

²¹ The edition of Cornell (2015) suffers from a misprint. In the text, *galbeas* should be corrected to *galbeos*. The apparatus criticus should be changed accordingly.

²² Against RE 6.2 (1909) s.v. Flachs, col. 2464 (F. Olck).

times, furs were not regarded as a luxury good.²³ On the contrary, *pelles* were usually associated with early times, when clothes had not yet been invented. Tribes living in a ‘state of nature’ like the Germans were dressed in *pelles*. Lucretius, in a famous passage, places animal skins at the earliest stages of culture.²⁴ According to him, primitive men first wore nothing at all and then adopted *pelles* as their first clothing. For this reason, skins and furs are completely out of place in a list of what must have been well-known articles of luxury.²⁵ The difficulty is solved when we consider that a textual corruption could have occurred again. A suitable word is then easily at hand. It is already found in Popma’s edition (1620) of the Roman historians.²⁶ In Roman literature, women usually do not wear *pelles*, but *pallae*. We should thus alter *pelles* to *pallas*. The word *palla* can designate either a precious cloak or a long sleeveless robe with straps (*‘peplos’*) (B 3). We will discuss later on what it meant in Cato, because it does not matter for the moment. In any case, this first change would yield *galbeos lineas pallas*, which resolves at least the problem of what word *lineas* belongs to. Unlike linen furs, a garment made of linen (*palla linea*) makes perfect sense.

Up to this point, however, we are not talking about what Cato wrote himself, but about what the text of the *Origines* that Festus had before his eyes looked like. We are still at the first stage of our analysis. As far as we can see now, Festus seems to have read the following version of the text:

*mulieres opertae auro purpuraque **arsinea** ret<icula> diadema<ta> coronas aureas
rusceas fasciolas **galbeos** lineas pallas redimicula <...>*

(for a translation, see below)

We can now turn to the question if this text faithfully reproduces Cato’s words or if Festus’ copy of the *Origines* already suffered from some textual corruption. My answer to this question is that it was corrupted to some extent.

²³ Against Marquardt/Mau (1886) 587, who for the time of the Republic can only refer to Cato.

²⁴ Lucr. 5.953–4: *neque uti pellibus et spoliis corpus vestire ferarum* [and they did not use furs nor clothed themselves in animal skins], 5.1001: *inde ... casas ac pellis ignemque pararunt* [then ... they created huts, furs, and fires].

²⁵ The difficulty has already been noticed but not satisfactorily resolved by Chassignet (1984) 105.

²⁶ I could not trace the origin of this particular conjecture. Popma does not comment on it in his critical appendix. In Peter’s critical apparatus, the emendation is wrongly attributed to Karl Ludwig Roth (1852), who edited the *Historicorum veterum Romanorum reliquiae* in the appendix of the Sallust edition of F. Gerlach. The text of the fragment can be found there on pp. 286–287.

2.3 Cato's version of F 113 P.

In the version known to Festus (Verrius), the text of Cato contained three glosses that Festus seems to have explained with all his art. The amount of dark words is thus very high (20 %), considering that the *Origines* do not belong to the dark ages of Roman literature and actually date to after the *Corpus Plautinum*. It seems that Festus (Verrius) has gone methodically wrong by attributing various implausible contents to all these words. As with other glosses,²⁷ some dark words could have resulted from textual corruption, and a far more meaningful text of the *Origines* can be restored by correcting the mistakes. The three glosses under discussion (**arsineus*, **rusceus*, **galbeus*) can be easily emended to the meaningful words **argenteus* (made of silver), *russeus* (red), and *galbinus* (green). This would seem to be the original wording of the *Origines*, which would then have been slowly corrupted until it became the obscure gibberish found in Festus' manuscript.

2.3.1 **arsineus* < *argenteus*

Cato begins to criticize female luxury by enumerating valuable headdresses. According to Festus, Cato lists four articles: the obscure **arsinea*, hairnets, diadems, and golden wreaths. Generally, it should be noted that **arsinea* does not figure in Varro's list of early Roman headdresses.²⁸ It is not amongst the obscure words discussed by the first Roman scholars and seems to be relatively recent, its life beginning only with Festus (or Verrius). Moreover, the content of the passage itself raises serious doubts that the word ever denoted a real garment. When we look at the two last headdresses in the list above, we find that their value is clearly indicated. The *diadema* is shown by its very name to be a royal ornament, and a wreath of gold (*aureus*) is very precious in contrast to a wreath made of cheap and more ephemeral materials like flowers and twigs.²⁹ Against this background, it is surprising that Cato should mention a simple hairnet (*reticulum*) that by itself is not a valuable headdress.³⁰ Women can wear normal hairnets without further ado. As to its value, the noun **reticula* thus necessarily requires an attribute.

This is provided by the preceding word **arsinea*, which, in contrast to Festus' view, is not a noun, but, as its ending already seems to indicate, an adjective referring to some precious material, i.e. either to gold (*aurum*) or to silver (*argentum*). Regarding orthography and rhetorical variety, the adjective *argentea* is clearly preferable. Maybe

²⁷ Cf. D 1, D 4.

²⁸ B 12 p. 455; C 1 pp. 574–575.

²⁹ On *coronae*, see most recently J. Radicke, *Salböl, Kränze, Myrrhenwein, Kratere*. Nochmals zum *Grabluxus* in den *Zwölf Tafeln* (Tab. 10,6 Bruns), ZPE 196 (2015), 78–79.

³⁰ B 12 p. 456.

it was written in an abbreviated form and thus became an obscure **arsinea*.³¹ If we accept this emendation, Cato criticized that women wore luxurious hairnets made of silver. Such an interpretation would be at least partly in tune with our further evidence. Precious **reticula* woven of golden threads are attested by archaeological findings and Latin literature: For example, Fortunata, the wife of the Petronian Trimalchio, is portrayed as possessing a specimen made of high-carat gold.³² By emending the meaningless **arsinea* to *argentea*, the noun **reticula* receives its required attribute, and Cato's criticism finally finds a meaningful target: Women are wearing silver hairnets, diadems, and golden wreaths or crowns on their head that are—at least according to Cato—overly expensive and ostentatious items of luxury.

2.3.2 **rusceus* < *russeus*

After the headdresses, Cato turns his attention to eye-catching garments. The term *fasciola* usually designates a breast wrap that is worn with the *tunica* (chiton). This is a typical accessory mentioned elsewhere in Greek and Latin literature (B 22). The emphasis here must be not so much on the value of the belt as on its striking colour. Contrary to Festus and the OLD, the word **rusceus* (attested only once) does not denote a colour at all.³³ The plant *ruscus* can be identified with certainty by the ancient information. It is a shrub called butcher's broom (incidentally, chosen as Germany's medicinal plant of the year in 2002). Although it has berries that are red when they are ripe, its main characteristic, as expressed by its Latin botanical name *ruscus aculeatus*, is that it is thorny. As the Latin sources show, this emphasis on the thorns was similarly prevalent in Antiquity.³⁴ According to the botanist Castor, the pointed leaves of the *ruscus* were used to make primitive brooms.³⁵ The berries do not constitute a permanent and defining quality of the plant. The adjective **rusceus* should thus not be thought to denote a colour. If anything, the hapax **rusceus* should rather be taken to mean 'thorny'.³⁶

³¹ In ThLL I col. 677.9–13, the **arsineum* is etymologically associated with the Egyptian town called Arsinoe (= *arsin(o)eum*). However, this case also requires a conjecture, which leaves us with an unknown hairnet.

³² B 12 p. 458.

³³ OLD s.v. *rusceus*: "coloured like the berries of butcher's broom, i. e. bright red"; there is no entry on it in the Georges.

³⁴ All places listed in OLD s.v. *ruscus* refer to this characteristic.

³⁵ Plin. NH 23.166: *Castor oxymyrsines ... foliis acutis, ex qua fiunt ruri scopae, ruscum vocavit* [Castor called the *oxymyrsines* ... with pointed leaves from which brooms are made in the countryside *ruscus*]; RE 1.1 A (1914) s.v. *ruscus*, col. 1235 (Orth).

³⁶ It cannot be compared with the other Greek and Latin colour terms (*crocota*, *caryinus*, *cerasinus*, *violaceus*) (B 11 pp. 416, 419, 439) which derive their meaning from the distinct colour of the fruit or flower referred to.

However, the difficulty may have again been caused by textual corruption. This time as well an easy emendation is possible. The gloss **rusceus* is not far away from *russeus* (red) in terms of orthography. Scaliger (1565) already wanted to correct **rusceus* to *russeus* in Festus, but the corruption must lie deeper and go back to Festus' copy of Cato, because Festus' lemma **ruscum* hinges on the form **rusceus*.³⁷ The colour red is also attested for other female garments (B 11).³⁸ A red belt, for example, is found in Apuleius. There, the young female servant Fotis is dressed in a *tunica* and a striking *russea fasceola* (B 1).³⁹ The emendation **russeus* in Festus' text (creating *russeas fasciolas*, red cords) is thus very simple and provides a perfect sense. Using a usual word (the common adjective *red*) and not an overly specific word (the name of a bush supposedly used as a metonym for that colour) to describe a general situation, Cato takes a stand against colourful clothing because he found it inappropriate for Roman matrons, either in general or in a crisis situation.

2.3.3 **galbeus* < *galbinus*

The last riddle to solve is the meaning of the gloss **galbeus*. Again, we should first have a look at the entire context. The **galbeus* is mentioned after red cords (*russeae fasciulae*) and before linen *pallae*. If we take the word, as Festus did, to be a noun and to denote an unknown kind of bracelet, it surprises that a piece of unusual jewellery should intrude into the description of two well-known normal garments. Even if we allow—in contrast to the preceding headdresses—for a certain disorder in Cato's enumeration, a second difficulty arises concerning the *pallae* made of linen. Like the simple hairnet (*reticulum*), linen clothes are nothing to induce a scathing criticism. Again, a qualifying attribute seems to be missing and again we may turn our eyes to the preceding gloss **galbeus*. As in the case of **arsinea*, we should think that the attribute had the form of an adjective, traces of which are still preserved in **galbeus*. A quite simple solution is not far away. The adjective *galbinus* (light green) would paleographically fit in well. An abbreviation may have caused the mistake.

The colour light green is attested elsewhere in Roman literature as a typical colour of female dress.⁴⁰ Again, Petronius' Fortunata may serve as an example of wearing a cord in the same light green shade together with a dark red undertunic.⁴¹ Men are

³⁷ Chassignet (1984) 105.

³⁸ Cf. pp. 439–443.

³⁹ Apul. Met. 2.7. The adjective *russeus* has been corrupted there too by an abbreviation.

⁴⁰ Cf. B 11 pp. 430–433.

⁴¹ Petron. 67.4: *venit ergo galbino succincta cingillo, ita ut infra cerasina appareret tunica et periscelides tortae phaecasiaeque inauratae* [She (sc. Fortunata) thus came having gathered her tunic with a light green belt, so that underneath a cherry red undertunic appeared and twisted leg-bands and gilded *phaecasia*]; for the interpretation of the passage, see B 1 pp. 268–272 and B 11 p. 443.

stigmatized as passive homosexuals (*pathici*) by reference to this colour. Juvenal rails against transvestites dressed in green tunics (*galbina rasa*).⁴² Martial describes a decadent dandy in a light green garment (*galbinatus*)⁴³ and decries a man who raves against luxury and wears dark clothes as a person with a dubious character (*galbini mores*), i.e. as being a disguised *pathicus*.⁴⁴ The colour *galbinus* is thus very well suited to garments worn by rich matrons. Together with red (*russeus*), it forms the same contrast of striking colours that we see on the clothing of the Fortunata. In a similar way, Cato adduces *russeae fasciolae* and *galbinae lineae pallae* to evoke the picture of inadequate female dress, especially when worn together.

We still have to see what the term *palla* designates in Cato. Does it refer to a cloak or to a foot-long sleeveless tunic (*'peplos'*)? A definite decision is difficult, but there are several points favouring the latter solution. Linen is exactly the material we would expect in case of a tunic (*chiton*), whereas an expensive coat would have to be of wool. Being coloured fits a tunic better than a coat too, as the parallels adduced above show. In addition, the odd colour contrast is more impressive when we imagine both colours visibly worn together in one garb. A coat, in contrast, would cover the red *fasciae*. Finally, the term *palla* also takes on the sense *'peplos'* in Naevius and Plautus, two authors that are roughly contemporary to Cato. For these reasons, the meaning *'peplos'* (i.e. a long sleeveless garment) seems preferable. The Roman matrons in Cato would thus be wearing a garment that we would later learn of as a *stola* (B 4).

2.4 Conclusion

Cato's remarks, if my reconstruction is correct, originally read as follows:

mulieres opertae auro purpuraque <...> argentea ret<icula>, diadema<ta>, coronas aureas, russeas fasciolas, galbinas lineas pallas, redimicula

Women covered over and over with gold and purple ... hairnets of silver, diadems, wreaths of gold, red cords, light green linen *pallae*, chains

Syntactically, the predicate that governs the accusative of the enumeration is missing in the quotation. Maybe, we should insert it after *purpuraque*. The statement of the text is thus far less odd than Festus and the Augustan grammarians believed it to be. Like some modern researchers, these scholars had the tendency, though the interval was only about hundred and fifty years, to think of Cato as a figure of Roman prehistory. Cato's perceived prehistorical status would then obviously have him using strange

⁴² Iuven. 2.97.

⁴³ Mart. 3.82.5.

⁴⁴ Mart. 1.96.8–9: *habeat et licet semper || fuscis colores, galbinos habet mores* [even if he always wears dark colours: he has light green mores]; for the interpretation of the epigram, see B 11 p. 428

archaic words. The historical reality looked different: Cato already lived in a luxurious Hellenistic world; his language and his vocabulary were quite similar to that of Cicero. Placing him in prehistory creates dual mistakes: He is neither a reliable source of true Roman prehistory (which was still four centuries before his time), nor should glosses simply be accepted as a supposed use of archaic Latin terms.

The person who speaks the critical words about the women's *luxuria* is not expressly noted, but it seems very likely that it was Cato himself. There is also the question of how the fragment fits within the framework of the *Origines*. Perhaps it was part of a speech that Cato inserted into his historical work.⁴⁵ Cato's so-called Rhodian oration (*Pro Rhodiensibus*) provides an example for the fact that he sometimes incorporated political speeches that he had actually delivered into the *Origines*. Thus we may suppose that he did the same in this case.

Our sources mention two actions taken by Cato against the luxury of female clothing.⁴⁶ First we hear that he unsuccessfully tried to stop the abolition of the *lex Oppia*, a luxury law banning the use of gold and purple enacted during the Second Punic War, in his consulate in 195 BCE,⁴⁷ then that he later introduced a luxury tax as a censor in 184 BCE.⁴⁸ It seems very attractive to link the fragment examined in this chapter to one of these occasions. To start with, it should be noted that the status of our historical sources on Cato's actions is very different. As regards the censorship, we still have verbatim quotations of two of Cato's own speeches, of *De vestitu et vehiculis* (On clothing and cars) and *De signis et tabulis* (On statues and pictures).⁴⁹ In contrast, Cato's consular speech on the *lex Oppia* is first attested by the historian Livy, who gives us a long debate between the tribune Valerius and the consul Cato. Modern historians have long been more or less sceptical of Livy's account.⁵⁰ It cannot be excluded that Livy

⁴⁵ Cf. Cato F 163 Malcovati with the testimonies; especially Gell. 6.3.7; Suerbaum (n. 4) 398–399.

⁴⁶ See, however, Beck/Walter (n. 4) 219: “Kontext des Luxus- und Dekadenzdiskurses im 2. Jh., an dem Cato intensiv teilnahm”; Cornell I (n. 4) 140: “Cato returned to it again and again.” The fragments that have survived are only few.

⁴⁷ Liv. 34.1–8 (Val. Max. 9.1.3). Livy summarizes the provisions of the law as follows (34.1.3): *ne qua mulier plus semunciam auri haberet neu vestimento versicolori uteretur neu iuncto vehiculo ... veheretur* [No woman should have more than half an ounce of gold, nor should she wear a colourful garment, nor use a carriage]; cf. on the *lex Oppia* in general: I. Sauerwein, *Die leges sumptuariae als römische Maßnahme gegen den Sittenverfall*, Hamburg 1970, 40–46; H. Tränkle, *Cato in der vierten und fünften Dekade des Livius*, Mainz 1971, 9–16; Ph. Culham, *The Lex Oppia*, *Latomus* 41 (1982), 786–793; E. Baltrusch, *Regimen Morum*, München 1989, 52–59; Perl/El-Qalqili (n. 3) 414–439 (with an extensive bibliography); most recently Wallace-Hadrill (2008), 334–335; B. Feichtinger, *Streiten über luxuria. Überlegungen zur lex Oppia-Episode bei Livius*, *Latomus* 74 (2015), 671–688; Cornell III (n. 4) 140.

⁴⁸ Liv. 39.44.2; Plutarch. *Cato maior* 18.2.

⁴⁹ *De vestitu et vehiculis*: Cato F 93 Malc. (= Prisc. inst. 6.36, GL 2 p. 226.16–18); *De signis et tabulis*: F 94 Malc. (= Festus p. 364.11–14 L.); F 95 Malc. (= Plin. NH 34.3).

⁵⁰ Meyer ORF (1842) 23: “*ut autem Livius orationem Catonis fictam operi suo inseruit, ita Graeci quoque scriptores idem fecerunt*”; see also the overviews of the various opinions in Sauerwein (n. 47) 59–66; Perl/El-Qalqili (n. 3) 430–431; Feichtinger (n. 47) 674.

invented Cato's entire consular intervention against the *lex Oppia* in order to fill up gaps in Cato's biography. In any case, there is some reason to believe that Cato himself did not include a long oration in his *Origines* during his consulate.⁵¹ It would only have highlighted his political defeat—he *tried* to stop the abolition. It thus seems better to attribute the fragment to Cato's time as censor and date it to the year 184 BCE.⁵²

However, there remains a difficulty even if we put it to the time of Cato's censorship.⁵³ According to Festus (Verrius), the fragment belongs to the seventh book of the *Origines*. There, however, Cato was already concerned with a much later period, i.e. the last years of his life. He went down to the year 167 BCE in the fifth book.⁵⁴ It is thus not the seventh, but the fifth book that will have comprised the years of his censorship. We therefore have to assume that either Cato did not insert the speech in which he criticised female luxury at its correct historical point in his work or that the book number seven given by Festus (Verrius) is wrong. Regarding the corrupt transmission of Festus, the latter hypothesis seems preferable to me. Nevertheless, we know too little to reach a well-founded conclusion in this matter. It is best to leave the whole question open. Maybe Cato spoke *de luxuria mulierum* at another occasion that has not found any echo in later historians.

51 Cf. also RE 22.1 (1953) s.v. Marcus Porcius Cato Censorius, col. 111–112 (M. Gelzer) (a remark in Cato's *Origines* inspired Livy to write the speeches); Perl/El-Qalqili (n. 3) 430–437 (the whole incident has been invented by Livy, Cato was not even in Rome at the time of the *abrogatio* of the law); Cornell (n. 4), vol. I, 214 n. 70.

52 Perl/El-Qalqili (n. 3) 426 n. 32.

53 The difficulty manifests itself in the evasive comments on the fragment, see most recently Beck/Walter (n. 4) 219; Cornell (n. 4) I 140.

54 Leo (n. 4) 295; most recently Cornell I (n. 4) 213–217.