

## IX.—The Lucii Afranii of Cic. Att. 1.16.13

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Some philological questions, although insoluble, are like old friends and should not be neglected.<sup>1</sup> It is my intention here to beg leave to add one more item to the already large bibliography on a minor but annoying passage in Cic. Att. 1.16.13:

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

The erudition which has been expended upon the interpretation of *fabam mimum*, which seems to be the proper reading of the phrase, is tremendous.<sup>2</sup> It is very generally recognized that, to explain this passage satisfactorily, one must also explain the similar phrase in Sen. Apocol. 9.3, where the best reading, from a textual point of view, would be *famam mimum*, with an editorial tendency to *fabam mimum* or *Fabam mimum*. It has been observed that in both the Senecan and the Ciceronian passages the phrase is used to express the exact opposite of apotheosis, and it would seem that the Senecan passage was composed in imitation of the Ciceronian. The explanations offered are magnificent demonstrations of the ingenuity of

<sup>1</sup> In this paper, as in others, I am at several points indebted for suggestions to my colleagues, Dr. B. L. Ullman and Dr. P. H. Epps.

<sup>2</sup> To cite only the more important references which discuss this passage and/or Sen. Apocol. 9.3: O. Ribbeck, *Comitorum Romanorum Fragmenta*<sup>3</sup> 374; A. Otto, *Die Sprichwörter und sprichwörtlichen Redensarten der Römer* (Leipzig 1890) 223 (cf. 127 f.); K. Münscher, *JB* 192 (1922) 149 f. (a summary of a number of articles); Schanz-Hosius, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur*<sup>4</sup> 1.263 f.; L.-A. Constans, *RevPhil* 3 sér., 2 (1928) 212 f.; *idem*, *REL* 6 (1928) 133. Besides these discussions, there are notes in the various editions, notably in those of Cicero's *Letters* by Constans (Budé edition) vol. 1, Notes Complémentaires, 284 f.; Winstedt (Loeb Classical Library); How and Clark (Oxford); Abbott (Ginn & Co.); Tyrrell and Purser (Dublin); and in those of Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* by A. P. Ball (in both his separate edition of this work and in his Macmillan edition which includes selected essays of Seneca); Waltz (Budé edition) in his Notes Complémentaires, 23; Rostagni (Torino) in his Note critiche al testo, 99 f. For the Ciceronian passage it is also valuable to consult the apparatus criticus in the edition by Sjögren (Upsala 1916) as well as that in the O. C. T.; cf. also *TLL* 6, p. 3, 55-57.

classical scholarship, the favorite ones being that there was a mime entitled *Faba*, or that *faba* alludes to some proverb or childish game which would form a contrast to apotheosis.<sup>3</sup> The text seems sound enough to discourage us from attempts at radical emendation.

It appears unlikely that we shall ever be able to give a completely adequate explanation of this little riddle, but it also seems striking that none of these modern scholars has troubled to explain the poor joke which led Cicero into producing for us this particular obscurity. What is really the matter is that Cicero thought so poorly of L. Afranius, later one of the consuls of 60 and the *hic* of this passage, that he proceeded to joke at length about his name in 61–60 — and Cicero was not the man to let go of a poor joke readily. In my suggestion it is possible that I have been anticipated by over three centuries by the French scholar Jean Passerat, but I have been unable to locate his work. My supposition of his thought rests on the fact that Tyrrell and Purser note in their edition that Passerat wished to read *Afranii mimum* instead of *fabam mimum*. While I should not wish to follow his emendation, Passerat must have been led to it by the line of reasoning which I wish to expound.<sup>4</sup>

The procedure is simply to follow Cicero's *Letters*. In *Att.* 1.1.1 there has been some effort to read *Auli filio*, which would mean Afranius, instead of *Aufidio*; but that emendation has been thoughtfully rejected by Tyrrell and Purser, Drumann-Groebe<sup>5</sup> and others. Consequently the first reference to Afranius in Cicero's correspondence would probably come in *Att.* 1.16.12, which dates from June or July of 61. In this paragraph we learn that the consular

<sup>3</sup> The meaning of *apokolokyntosis* is discussed at length by H. Wagenvoort, *Mnemosyne* tert. ser., 1 (1934) 4–27, which does not seem to help us with *faba*, nor does the other bibliography given in Schanz-Hosius (above, note 2) 2.471 f., nor does F. A. Todd, "Some *Cucurbitaceae* in Latin Literature: 2. The Apocolocyntosis," *CQ* 37 (1943) 103–107 — to mention only major and novel discussions. Nothing pertinent to our problem appears in A. C. Andrews, "The Bean and Indo-European Totemism," *American Anthropologist* N. S., 51 (1949) 274–292.

<sup>4</sup> The most probable location for the publication of this emendation would seem to be the rare *Conjecturarum liber* (Paris 1612). There are in this country numerous copies of Passerat's revision of Ambrogio Calepino's *Dictionarium* (with various dates and places of publication), but in them can be found only *Fabarum arrosor*, which is defined as a person who sold his vote in the elections; and *Faba nummus*, to which is attached the explanation that beans were formerly the manner of casting votes, a custom which was the origin of the Pythagorean prohibition against their consumption, with the additional and possibly pertinent comment: *Corrupta itaque suffragia hoc lepidissimo tropo significavit M. Tull. lib. 6. epist. 1.*

<sup>5</sup> *Geschichte Roms*<sup>2</sup> 5.430.

elections for 60 are in prospect, and that Pompey is spending vast sums of money to secure the consular election for Afranius, who is referred to as *Auli filius*. For some reason or reasons Cicero finds this method of referring to Afranius eminently satisfying, and he continues it in later letters. The editors listed in footnote 2 have made various suggestions on this point, as that it was a means by which Cicero avoided naming Afranius openly (although it is perfectly clear who is meant), or that it somehow contains a slur on his parentage (although we have epigraphical evidence that his father's name was Aulus: *CIL* 1<sup>2</sup>.752 [= 1.601] = 9.5275 = *ILS* 878; cf. also the fasti in the summary prefixed to Dio Cass. 37). I shall postpone until later in this paper some suggestions as to the humor possibly inherent in the very phrase *Auli filius*; there is a more important point which must be made first.

I wish mainly to call attention to the fact that Cicero, having alluded in this perhaps obscure manner to L. Afranius, then at once thinks, but does not write, that the name of the comic poet of the preceding generation was also L. Afranius; and the rest of this letter, keeping up what becomes a feeble joke, contains several theatrical allusions. As Cicero continues in *Att.* 1.16.12, he notes that a consul of 61 (M. Pupius Piso) was actually credited by rumor with maintaining bribery agents (*divisores*) in his home, in which occupation he was *deterioris histrionis similis* (which I take to be the correct reading; cf. a similar figure of speech in Plut. *Cic.* 12.4).

Then, in § 13, comes the phrase *fabam mimum*, which is what the great consulship will be if Afranius is elected. It would seem that we should find something theatrical in the phrase, rather than a reference to some folklore about beans, if the joke is granted to be that L. Afranius was the name of both the playwright<sup>6</sup> and the prospective consul. The acid point to Cicero's remark here would then be that the prospective consul was one of Pompey's generals who had risen to power in his campaigns, but who was without the training and background suitable to the high office. Although the evidence is slight, it seems to be true that Afranius, like Labienus and others, came from Picenum, where Pompey had such great influence and interest.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> W. Beare, *The Roman Stage* (London 1950) Chap. 15 and Appendix D, discusses Afranius as a writer of the *fabula togata* (or perhaps *tabernaria*).

<sup>7</sup> R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford 1939) 31, n. 5, where he, as *ILS* 878, refers to the inscription I have mentioned above. On p. 31 Syme gives a discussion of some other Picenes who were connected with Pompey, among whom we may note

In § 14 of *Att.* 1.16 Cicero writes of other matters, but in § 15, when he has occasion to speak of literature, his allusion reverts to the drama. Cicero wrote that he was disappointed that Archias had as yet written nothing about him, and he declared that he feared that Archias, having finished his Greek poem for the Luculli, "nunc ad Caecilianam fabulam spectet." There we have another double reference, for the topic was to be the Caecilii Metelli, while the manner, if we stretch a point to preserve a feeble pun, was to be that of the poet Caecilius.<sup>8</sup> The reference to Caecilius Statius is not apposite, but Cicero is interested in a literary double-entendre in this case, not in accurate literary history,<sup>9</sup> just as often his quotations from the poets have only a slight relevancy.<sup>10</sup> I doubt that it is possible to find anything humorous in the family history of the Caecilii Metelli; Cicero merely used the name of the comic poet Caecilius Statius because it made a double-entendre and suited his own pique of the moment.

Early in 60 (*Att.* 1.18.5) Cicero described the two consuls. He again called Afranius *Auli filius* (which is a certain emendation of the text), found him hopeless as a consul, and associated his name with that of another Picene, Lollius Palicanus:

Auli autem filius, o di immortales! quam ignavus ac sine animo miles! quam dignus qui Palicano, sicut facit, os ad male audiendum cotidie praebeat!<sup>11</sup>

In *Att.* 1.19.4 Afranius, who had purchased the consulship, is described as the traditional bumpkin: ille alter nihil ita est ut plane quid emerit nesciat (where *emerit* is the generally accepted reading).

Lollius Palicanus, an orator of sorts whose name comes up again in connection with Afranius. It is curious how often these Picene adherents of Pompey turn up in the evidence, as when Labienus comes to our attention as the rebuilder of Cingulum (L. R. Taylor, "Labienus and the Status of the Picene Town Cingulum," *CR* 35 [1921] 158 f.), or as when Labienus is suggested as the target of Catullus 94, 105, 114, 115 (T. Frank, "Cicero and the Poetae Novi," *AJP* 40 [1919] especially 407-409), or in the question of Labienus' desertion of Caesar for Pompey (R. Syme, "The Allegiance of Labienus," *JRS* 28 [1938] 113-125). We cannot be certain of the origins and descent of A. Gabinius, the consul of 58 of whom we shall treat presently, but the name is common in the neighborhood of Capua, which renders Picene origin unlikely; cf. the references cited *infra* in footnote 17.

<sup>8</sup> When Cicero uses the adjective *Caecilianus*, he means the comic poet: *Fin.* 2.13, *Tusc.* 3.56, *Sex. Rosc.* 46, *Cael.* 37.

<sup>9</sup> Schanz-Hosius (above, note 2) 1.533 mentions an attempt to ascertain the identity of the Caecilius about whom Archias was to write.

<sup>10</sup> Tyrrell and Purser, *The Correspondence of Cicero* 3<sup>2</sup>.202.

<sup>11</sup> Cic. *Brut.* 223: aptior etiam Palicanus auribus imperitorum; cf. Val. Max. 3.8.3.

In *Att.* 1.20.5 Cicero returns to the theme that Afranius' consulship is not a consulship at all; but here Cicero is inspired to use a Greek word which first occurs in this passage in this metaphorical meaning, and he calls Afranius' consulship a "black eye" (*ὕψπιον*) for his sponsor Pompey.<sup>12</sup> Afranius remains constantly the joke, probably a good general, but certainly no statesman and definitely not *urbanus*.<sup>13</sup>

There may be a reference to *Auli filius* in *Att.* 2.3.1, but the text tradition is bad at that point, and the passage would add little to our discussion even if *Auli filio* is the proper reading. There are, of course, references to Afranius in Cicero's writings of later date. My point is only that in 61–60 Cicero is constantly annoyed that Pompey should have thrust upon the Roman state a man who was unsuited to be a chief executive. Cicero at that time regularly finds in Afranius' bearing a proper topic for wry humor, and in *Att.* 1.16.13 the joke was that the future consul had the same name as the comic poet, which made him a latter-day comedian. The Senecan passage, if we should read *fabam* rather than *famam*, would appear to be an example of tasteless antiquarianism in imitation of Cicero, since the humor, even if *fabam mimum* had some popular significance, would lose much of the superficial wit of the Ciceronian passage because the Senecan could produce no hint of there being two comic poets. There is, of course, the possibility that the correct Senecan reading is *famam*.

Before we go on to explore the aspect of Cicero's humor inherent in the phrase *Auli filius* itself, it is well to point out that *fabam mimum*, whether that is or is not what Cicero originally wrote, is probably an imaginary title and does not belong to a real play, Ribbeck and Schanz-Hosius to the contrary. On another occasion,

<sup>12</sup> H. J. Rose, "The Greek of Cicero," *JHS* 41 (1921) 91–116. The lexicon shows classical uses of it in the literal meaning.

<sup>13</sup> It seems to me quite proper to consider as some kind of conventional personal insult, although possibly based on fact, the passage in Dio Cass. 37.49.3, which is peculiar enough to be worth quoting: καὶ αὐτῶν τῶν ὑπάρτων Ἀφράνιος μὲν, ὀρχεῖσθαι γὰρ βέλτιον ἢ τι διαπράσσειν ἠπίστατο, πρὸς οὐδὲν αὐτῷ [i.e., Pompey] συνήρατο, κτλ. There is a possible conative significance to the imperfect tense, but otherwise the Greek of this passage yields no secrets. The referee for this paper correctly observed that the passage in Dio doubtless was derived from a passage similar in tone to the one to which Cicero was replying in *Mur.* 13, where Cicero was at pains to clear Murena of the same charge of dancing. The most curious item is that, as I shall discuss presently, several passages in Cicero refer to the terpsichorean activities of Gabinius, who will also figure in this paper in other respects.

as was remarked by Schanz-Hosius (1.263), Cicero invented *Britannicus iure consultus* as the name for a character in an imaginary mime.<sup>14</sup>

In order to understand what entertainment Cicero found in the actual words *Auli filius*, we must consider each word separately, and then arrive only at a succession of probabilities. The joke is quasi-esoteric, since Cicero made it only to Atticus. It is also perhaps necessary to observe that the whole phrase itself is derogatory, for the usual form was to speak, for example, of *Quintus pater* and *Quintus filius*, or to give more of the name if the praenomina were different. The distinction might be observed in the difference between Cicero's use of *filiola Curionis* (*Att.* 1.14.5) and *Curio filius* (*Att.* 2.19.3, 2.24.2; *Brut.* 218); or in Cicero's reference to *Aesopi filius* (*Att.* 11.15.3) or to *C. Clodi filius* (*Att.* 3.17.1), as opposed to the *M. Cato pater* and *Q. Catulus filius* (*Brut.* 222) which occur in juxtaposition and which indicate senior and junior with regard to their respective families.

The humor in the *Auli* does not lie in the fact that it was the praenomen of Afranius' father; the name in itself was enough to stir Cicero's risibility. Cicero wrote of *Auli lex* when referring to a law of Gabinius in *Att.* 6.2.7.<sup>15</sup> Not only was Cicero amused by Gabinius' praenomen, which was a common one in the Gabinian gens,<sup>16</sup> but he also criticized Gabinius for the same item as Dio Cassius (37.49.3) criticized Afranius, for his dancing. Cicero liked to speak of Gabinius as *saltator*.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Fam.* 7.11.2 (to Trebatius): Denique, si cito te rettuleris, sermo nullus erit; is diutius frustra afueris, non modo Laberium sed etiam sodalem nostrum Valerium pertimesco. Mira enim persona induci potest Britannici iure consulti. The turn of phrase is also found in Suet. *Aug.* 99.1, where Augustus on his deathbed spoke of having finished *mimus vitae*, which certainly would not lead one to look for a mime *Vita*; for Augustus' meaning cf. V. Gardthausen, *Augustus und seine Zeit* (Leipzig 1891) 2.855.

<sup>15</sup> *Auli lex ius* there would seem to be the correct reading for *alexius* or *A. Lexius*, since in the preceding sentence Cicero wrote *lex Gabinia*. The humor in referring here to Gabinius as Aulus must lie in the name itself, rather than in any connection between Gabinius and Afranius, for this letter is dated in 50 B.C. It is therefore quite different from the passage on Publius [Clodius] and Publius [Vatinus] in *Cic. Fam.* 1.9.19, and probably unrelated to the vexed problem of the significance of a praenomen used alone although H. L. Axtell used *Auli filius* in "Men's Names in the Writings of Cicero: VI, Praenomen," *CP* 10 (1915) 398-400; cf. E. M. Pease, "The Greeting in the Letters of Cicero," *Studies in Honor of Basil L. Gildersleeve* (Baltimore 1902) 398, 403; Tyrrell and Purser 1.3.7.

<sup>16</sup> Münzer, "Gabinus," *RE* 7 (1912) 422.

<sup>17</sup> Drumann-Groebe (above, note 5) 3.57; E. M. Sanford, "The Career of Aulus Gabinius," *TAPA* 70 (1939) 64-92; and the note relating to *Cic. Dom.* 60 on p. 127

It would seem to be no accident that Cicero laughed at both men for the same praenomen, for it is possible to show a slight connection between the two men. Gabinius' wife was Lollia,<sup>18</sup> apparently the daughter of M. Lollius Palicanus who had been tribune in 71 and who, to Cicero's amusement, said harsh things about Afranius to his face in 60.<sup>19</sup> Although the Gabinii had resided at Rome for some time, it seems not unreasonable to suppose that Cicero was thus entertained by the sight of this "Picene society" with which Gabinius associated at Rome, and that Cicero was guilty of a deliberate sneer at their background. There is then the further possibility that Cicero was mocking their pronunciation of the name Aulus, for in Umbrian, Volscian, Faliscan, and in rustic Latin *au* was pronounced as long (possibly open) *o*,<sup>20</sup> a pronunciation which would be regarded as rustic in Roman Latin. Atticus would of course be aware of the allusion to pronunciation which was the basis of the joke, but we could hardly expect the pronunciation to be reflected in a manuscript.<sup>21</sup> As was remarked in footnote 7, we do not know Gabinius' origins, although the presumption would be for the neighborhood of Capua from inscriptions of Gabinii there. Many of his associates, from his connections with Pompey, would come from Picenum, among them his wife Lollia and Afranius the consul of 60. Picenum might well have been under the influence of the Umbrian use of *ō* for *au*, as well as the rather general rustic tendency in that direction.

While we are trying to gather together all possibilities, however remote, as to the peculiar significance of the use of *Auli filius*, it may be well to note that Cicero first used it about the time that Afranius gave public notice that he was standing for office in the

of R. G. Nisbet's edition of that oration (Oxford 1939). The most conspicuous passages appear to be Cic. *Red. Sen.* 13; *Dom.* 60; *Pis.* 18, 22; *Planc.* 87.

<sup>18</sup> Drumann-Groebe (above, note 5) 3.57; Münzer, "Lollius (Lollia)," *RE* 13 (1927) 1393 f.

<sup>19</sup> Münzer, "Lollius (Palicanus)," *RE* 13 (1927) 1391.

<sup>20</sup> C. D. Buck, *A Grammar of Oscan and Umbrian* (Boston 1904) 46; E. H. Sturtevant, *The Pronunciation of Greek and Latin*<sup>2</sup> (Philadelphia 1940) 129-132; R. G. Kent, *The Sounds of Latin*<sup>2</sup> (Baltimore 1940) § 41; Sturtevant also refers to the very interesting article by J. Brück, "*Au* zu *ō* und *ō* zu *au* im Latein," *Glotta* 26 (1937/38) 145-178, especially 145-147 which deal with *Olus* for *Aulus*, as does R. Cagnat, *Cours d'épigraphie latine*<sup>4</sup> (Paris 1914) 39.

<sup>21</sup> Perhaps a fair analogy would be the explanation of Livy's *Patavinitas* as being an objection to his pronunciation rather than to his style: J. Whatmough, "Quemadmodum Pollio Reprehendit in Liuiio Patauinitatem?" *HSCP* 44 (1933) 95-130.

elections in 61. The suggestion has been made that it perhaps was customary for a candidate to give his father's name as well as his own,<sup>22</sup> and that the famous passage in Asconius (p. 64, Stangl) should be understood to read that Cicero did not give his father's name at the *professio* (*patrem omisit*), not that his father died in 64 (*patrem amisit*).<sup>23</sup> A recent article would seem to indicate the alternative possibility that Afranius might have occasioned comment, not by leaving out his father's name, but by the peculiar way in which he inserted it.<sup>24</sup> If Afranius was of Picene origin, as seems likely, and if the area of his origin was influenced by Umbria, as Poultney's article tentatively suggests, then Afranius may have followed the Umbrian practice in regard to names, which would have led him to cite his father's name after his own praenomen rather than after his nomen.

There could, of course, have been something unusual about the citizenship of Afranius' father. There is a note in Tyrrell and Purser, *The Correspondence of Cicero* 6<sup>2</sup>.337 (on *Fam.* 13.52), which happens to be on Aulus but which could have been on other praenomina. At that point are collected passages pertinent to the fact that a freedman or foreigner sometimes did not take the praenomen of his patron upon receiving citizenship. Hence Cicero might have meant that there was something unusual but well-known about the elder Afranius' praenomen. Such a meaning of the phrase, of course, would separate it entirely, and perhaps wrongly, from the *Auli lex* which referred to Gabinius.

In various places Cicero derived a large amount of humor from names, and a few remarks on some types of nominal jokes may be of assistance in comprehending the *filius* part of our joke. The commonest type of humor is the one Cicero calls *interpretatio nominis* in *De Or.* 2.257 f., the sort of joke in which the humor depends on the fact that numerous Roman names have a clear meaning, such names as Brutus, Lepidus, Rex, Balbus.<sup>25</sup> Drumann-

<sup>22</sup> Tyrrell and Purser 1<sup>2</sup>.132f.

<sup>23</sup> Certainly candidates did do strange things with cognomina: Tyrrell and Purser 5<sup>2</sup>.246 f.

<sup>24</sup> J. W. Poultney, "Volscians and Umbrians," *AJP* 72 (1951) 113-127, especially 118 f., 126 f. Let us not forget that Cicero was of Volscian descent.

<sup>25</sup> A random collection of these can be found in *Att.* 1.16.10, 6.1.25, 14.14.2; *Fam.* 9.19.2. (Cf. also Varro's choice of interlocutors in his work on agriculture for the meanings of their names.) Cicero also sometimes worked variations on a theme, as when the force of *ius verrinum* (*Verr.* 2.1.121) rested more on the possible meanings of



Groebe (1.26) long ago called attention to the fact that our passages resemble *Terrae filius* in *Att.* 1.13.4 (cf. *Fam.* 7.9.3), although it is hard to agree that our passages must necessarily have the same meaning of insignificance as that phrase. To Drumann-Groebe's *Terrae filius* we should add *Amyntae filius* (*Att.* 12.9); by this phrase Cicero refers to L. Marcius Philippus as if he were Philip of Macedon, using the similarity of names as a basis for considering the two men to be identical, just as he had in the case of the two Afranii. Sometimes Cicero indulged in such abstract (or point-less?) humor that he had to hasten to explain it, as when in *Fam.* 12.25.1 he at once explained *Minotauri* by *id est Calvisi et Tauri*. Certainly we arrive at the general observation that in his humor on names Cicero, so long as the joke was apt in a superficial way, was not concerned to be either appropriate or apposite.

In his amiable *Roba di Roma* W. W. Story in the course of Chapter 6 remarked on the Italian habit of conferring nicknames, sometimes with such enthusiasm that true names were almost forgotten. For examples he referred to art (as Tintoretto) as well as to the practice of the ordinary Roman of the nineteenth century. Cicero had the same habit. Consequently *Auli filius* is only a variant of his practice at other times, as when he calls Pompey Sampsiceramus or makes jokes on the meanings of names. I doubt that, with Constans and Carcopino,<sup>26</sup> we should believe that Cicero meant to cast aspersions on the fair name of Afranius' mother. It was just that other people's names were a source of irrepressible humor to Cicero.

*verrinum*, while in *Fam.* 9.18.3 he was more amused by the contrasting interpretations of *ius* in *Haterianum ius* and *Hirtianum ius*. Cf. also E. S. McCartney, "Puns and Plays on Proper Names," *CJ* 14 (1919) 343-358.

<sup>26</sup> Constans in his Budé edition of the *Letters*, 1.153, n. 3; which is cited with approval by J. Carcopino, *Les secrets de la correspondance de Cicéron* (Paris 1947) 1.426. Nothing is known of Afranius' mother; all that is known of his father is the name Aulus. The only positive statement that Afranius was "of humble birth" (or, "of obscure station") is given by Plut. *Praec. rei publ. ger.* 11 (cf. Klebs, "Afranius," *RE* 1 [1894] 710), but with no details.