

Victus Victor: Remembering Cato Uticensis in the Age of Augustus

When Cato was monumentalized after his suicide as Cato Uticensis by the opponents of Caesar and thus entered the ranks of Rome's exemplary heroes, he came to hold the position of the chief Republican *exemplum* (even more so than Pompey) that embodied resistance to Caesar and his victory. After Caesar's assassination and a whole new round of civil wars that saw Caesar's heir emerge triumphant, the memory of Cato continued to evolve with the changing situations of those communities invested in keeping his this *exemplum* alive. The bulk of scholarship on the significance of Cato in the subsequent Augustan period (Pecchiura 1965, Fehrlé 1983, Goar 1987, Gäth 2011) has tended to focus on the surviving literary artifacts (Horace, Vergil, Manilius) and the evidence this might provide for reading a given author's attitude toward Augustus. There is much to gain, however, in also leveraging the analytical toolkit of cultural memory studies (e.g. Assmann 1995, Bommas 2011, Rigney 2016) and Roman exemplarity (Roller 2018, Langlands 2018) to look more closely at the cultural *processes* that helped shape Cato's memory as well as the variety of media available to those who wanted to remediate that memory for new purposes in the new imperial age of Augustus.

This paper will go beyond the obvious literary references in Horace (*Odes* 1.12 and 2.1), Vergil (*Aen.* 8.670 most likely), and Livy (*periochae* 104-8, 112-14) to set the recall of Cato as a Republican *exemplum* within the larger cultural landscape of the Augustan period. One theme that emerges is the central importance of Cicero in keeping Cato before the eyes of readers during the Augustan age. His works, widely read throughout the imperial period (Gowing 2011), served to commemorate Cato on multiple levels, not only through his famed panegyric *Cato* (which proved powerful enough to provoke an *Anticato* from Caesar) but also through his

numerous mentions of Cato in both his letters and published speeches. Cicero's privileged place in Augustan literary culture and rhetorical training meant that Cato would not disappear from Roman cultural memory despite the wishes of those who no doubt wished the troublesome Republican martyr would fade away under Augustus.

A second main theme is that one of the most significant (and overlooked) aspects of the Augustan-era Cato is his clear association with victory—a fact that would have stood out in a post-Actium world where Augustus had claimed world victory and monopolized triumphal imagery. Horace for example reacts to Pollio's history of the civil wars by remarking how he could see “the whole earth subdued *except* the fierce soul of Cato” (*cuncta terrarum subacta | praeter atrocem animum Catonis*, C. 2.1.23-24), and Manilius placed Cato in the galactic hall of Roman heroes—notably right before he names Caesar—as *Cato fortunae victor* (1.797). This victorious Cato could find no place within the sanctioned commemorations of Augustan-era media such as the *summi viri* of his Forum, and so Uticensis found refuge instead in the declamatory schools, the oral exemplary tradition (as Valerius Maximus shows), the lost histories of Livy and Pollio, and the poets who could both praise Augustus and yet remind their audiences that not every kind of victory belonged to the name *Caesar*.

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