

Cato as Exemplary Historian in *Against Verres*

This paper examines a famous saying of Cato the Censor's about Sicily in light of its received context at the beginning of the second book of Cicero's second *actio* against Verres (F129 *FRHist*; Cic. *Verr.* 2.2.5). Building on Cornell's suggestion that the quotation may come from Cato's *Origines*, I argue that its inclusion in the so-called *laus Siciliae* draws attention both to the historiographic nature of Cicero's encomium, and to his exemplary citation of Cato the historian (Cic. *Verr.* 2.2.1-8; see Cic. *Orat.* 210 for its title as '*laus*').

Though Cicero's use of, and views on, history, *exempla*, and Sicily are well studied, not much has been made of his citation and exemplification of individual historians (Van der Blom 2010; Fox 2007; Vasaly 1993). Cato, a figure who looms large over Republican politics, oratory, and historiography, may be an exception, but more remains to be said on how and why Cicero quotes Cato, whom he cites and names more than any other Roman historian (Fleck 1993). Moreover, our understanding of the social capital of Cato's and Cicero's literary output has increased recently (Sciarrino 2011 and Stroup 2015 respectively). Thus, I believe it is time to revisit the fragment considering these recent developments.

Laudatory descriptions of places and peoples are typical of oratorical exercises and useful for *captatio benevolentiae*, even in forensic speeches such as the *Verrines* (Frazel 2009). The passage describing Sicily's prized status as a Roman province, however, also bears notable similarities to digressions like those found in historiography. Cicero begins with a brief survey of Sicily's role in Rome's imperial expansion, continues with the *exempla* of Scipio Africanus and Marcellus as the island's benefactors, and then cites Cato's saying that "Sicily is the storehouse of our state, the wet nurse of the Roman people" (*cellam penariam rei publicae nostrae, nutricem plebis Romanae Siciliam*, 2.2.5). His citation of Cato's words is here juxtaposed with

the reference to Scipio's and Marcellus' *deeds* just earlier in the passage (2.2.4); given the well-known geographic and ethnographic bent of the *Origines*, and Cato's political connection to the island in his post as military tribune, the choice to quote, rather than to cite his actions, is meaningful, and serves to bring to mind the textual trail Cato left behind. Furthermore, Cicero even offers a correction to the idea of Sicily as "storehouse:" it is more like "that well-known treasury of our ancestors, ancient and full" (*sed pro aerario illo maiorum vetere ac referto fuisse*, 2.2.5). Though this clearly furthers the contrast between the previous management of the island and Verres', it also shows him rewriting, in a sense, Cato's words to fit his time and purpose. This contestation of a direct citation can be viewed as historiographic technique to bolster Cicero's own historical authority.

Thus, by viewing the *laus* through its citational practice, and the fragment through its context as it has come down to us, I suggest that Cicero's quotation of Cato here draws on the *exemplum* of Cato specifically in his role as historian. This reading has implications for how the second *actio* of the *In Verrem* (which was never delivered but only circulated as text) fit into the orator's program of self-fashioning and self-definition, and more broadly, for Cicero's place in the historiographic tradition of the Roman Republic.

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