Madeline Kinkoph

Throughout this paper the similarities and differences between *Cato the Elder* by Plutarch, and *The Loves* by Ovid, will not only be compared, but also the time periods that these two short stories were written in. Cato lived during the third Punic war, but *Cato the Elder* was not written until later after he passed away. *The Loves* was written during Augustus’s Principate. Due to these stories taking place in two very different time periods, it is important for this paper to look at what is going on in Rome as well.

 Early Roman culture was built on the idea of “mos maiorum” which simply means “custom of the ancestors.” These customs were also the values each Roman citizen was expected to follow/live by. Cato was described as the perfect Roman male figure. He displayed the Roman values/virtues, such as: piety, faith, virtue, and gravity. In the story, *Cato the Elder*, Cato’s Roman like qualities are described, “ In battle, he showed himself effective in hand combat, sure and steadfast of foot, and with a fierce expression…” One of the best qualities a man in Roman culture could have was being fearless, which Cato definitely was. During the Res Publica in Rome, government was heavily influenced by the struggle between the patricians (land owning aristocrats), and plebeians (citizen commoners, often times farmers). Portable wealth was not important to the majority (plebeians) during this time because they were content staying humble and focusing on their families. Cato was picked to be a consul, which he was not completely thrilled about because he was content being a farmer, but everyone in the city admired Cato, and wanted him to help run the city.

 In the short story *The Loves* by Ovid, it is clear family was not of high importance because of the wife having a marital affaire. It is obvious there is an affair happening, when Ovid begins the story by saying, “Your husband? Going to the same dinner as us? I hope it chokes him.” Ovid was a man who thought about himself, and very rarely others which was an unworthy trait to have in Roman culture, and the complete opposite from Cato who was an upstanding good Roman citizen.

 Another contrast between Augustus’s Principate, and the Res Publica time period was that the Res Publica was a time in government where there was a republic set in place, allowing citizens to participate in elections. However, Augustus served as a single consul, who kept republic institutions in tack, but stripped away their power. One of the few things both time periods have in common was their strong sense of family ties. Although sexual freedom was more profound during the Principate time period than in the Res Publica time, Augustus had laws in place making adultery a crime. Augustus also holds old Roman values, and the idea of “mos maiorum” to high importance. Both time periods wanted to keep family importance at the center of the social hemisphere. Also, during the Res Publica, the people were content working as farmers, and staying humble. Where as, in the Principate period, richness was at an all time high, and slaves did a majority of the common work, so plebeians were left to entertain themselves thus creating a flourishing social life in Rome.

 Although there are major differences between Ovid and Plutarch’s short stories, there are also some similarities. This is especially true when we analyze the time periods these stories were written in to help us understand the author’s point of view. Having an understanding to the historical background is key to being able to compare and contrast.