

stuprum matri intulisse: Caesar's Incest Dream as Characterization

1. Suet. Jul. 7.1–2:

Quaestori ulterior Hispania obuenit; ubi cum mandatu praetoris iure dicundo conuentus circumiret Gadisque uenisset, animaduersa apud Herculis templum Magni Alexandri imagine ingemuit et quasi pertaesus ignauiam suam, quod nihil dum a se memorabile actum esset in aetate, qua iam Alexander **orbem terrarum subegisset**, missionem continuo efflagitauit ad captandas quam primum maiorum rerum occasiones in urbe. [2] Etiam confusum eum somnio proximae noctis—nam uisus erat per quietem stuprum matri intulisse—coniectores ad amplissimam spem incitauerunt **arbitrium terrarum orbis** portendi interpretantes, quando mater, quam subiectam sibi uidisset, non alia esset quam terra, quae omnium parens haberetur.

As quaestor he was given charge of Further Spain. While there, when he was making the circuit of the courts to give decisions by praetorian mandate, he came to Gades. After contemplating a statue of Alexander the Great at the Temple of Hercules, he groaned aloud, almost as if he were disgusted with his own idleness since he was now at the same age as Alexander was when he had **conquered the world**, while he himself had done nothing memorable. Immediately after that he urgently requested to be discharged from office in order to seize an opportunity for greater things at Rome as soon as possible. [2] When he was disturbed by a dream he had on the following night that he had violated his own mother, the dream interpreters inspired in him the highest hopes by interpreting it as an omen that he would conquer the earth, since his mother (whom he had seen subjected to him) was actually the earth—the parent of everyone.¹

2. Artemidorus 1.79:

εἴ τις οὖν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ μητέρα σύγχρωτα, ὅπερ καὶ κατὰ φύσιν τινὲς λέγουσι...
ἀγαθὸν δὲ καὶ παντὶ δημαγωγῶι καὶ πολιτευτῆι· σημαίνει γὰρ τὴν πατρίδα ἢ μήτηρ. ὥσπερ οὖν ὁ μὴνόμενος κατὰ νόμον Ἀφροδίτης παντὸς ἄρχει τοῦ σώματος τῆς συνούσης πειθομένης καὶ ἐκούσης, οὕτως ὁ ἰδῶν πάντων προστίσεται τῶν τῆς πόλεως πραγμάτων.

If someone should penetrate his own mother flesh-to-flesh, which some say is in accordance with nature... it is good for every leader of the mob and politician. For the mother signifies the fatherland. And so, just as one who has sex in accordance with the law of every Aphrodite rules over the body of an obedient and willing partner, so too does the observer preside over all the affairs of the city (*trans. Harris-McCoy 2012*).

3. Suet. Jul. 6:

Quaestor Iuliam amitam uxoremque Corneliam defunctas laudauit e more pro rostris. et in amitae quidem laudatione de eius ac patris sui utraque origine sic refert: “Amitae meae Iuliae maternum genus ab regibus ortum, paternum cum diis immortalibus coniunctum est. nam ab Anco Marcio sunt Marci Reges, quo nomine fuit mater; a Venere Iulii, cuius gentis familia est nostra. est ergo in genere et sanctitas regum, qui plurimum inter homines pollent, et caerimonia deorum, quorum ipsi in potestate sunt reges.”

When he was quaestor he gave the customary eulogies for both his aunt Julia and wife Cornelia when they died. In the *laudatio* for his aunt he also recounted their paternal and maternal ancestries: “The maternal lineage of my aunt came from the kings, and her paternal side was connected by marriage with the gods. For her mother’s family, the Marci Reges, are from Ancus Marcius. And the Julii, of which we are a branch, come from Venus. Therefore in our stock there is the sanctity of the kings, who are very powerful among mankind, and the reverence of the gods, to whom kings owe their power.”

4. Suet. Jul. 6:

In Corneliae autem locum Pompeiam duxit Quinti Pompei filiam, L. Sullae neptem; cum qua deinde diuortium fecit adulteratam opinatus a Publio Clodio, quem inter publicas **caerimonias** penetrasse ad eam muliebri ueste tam constans fama erat, ut senatus quaestionem de pollutis sacris decreuerit.

Moreover, in place of Cornelia he married Pompeia, the daughter of Quintus Pompeius and Sulla’s granddaughter. Afterwards, he divorced her, since he believed that she had an affair with Publius Clodius.

¹ Translations of Suetonius are mine.

The rumor that Clodius, disguised as a woman, had approached her during public religious ceremonies was so prevalent that the senate conducted an investigation concerning the pollution of the sacred rites.

5. Suet. Jul. 49:

Gallias Caesar subegit, Nicomedes Caesarem;
 Ecce Caesar nunc triumphat qui subegit Gallias,
 Nicomedes non triumphat qui subegit Caesarem.

“Caesar conquered Gaul, and Nicomedes conquered Caesar;
 look, Caesar who conquered the Gauls now triumphs,
 but Nicomedes who conquered Caesar does not.”

6.

<p>(a) Lucan 10.15–19 (Caesar) intrepidus superum sedes et templa uetusti numinis antiquas Macetum testantia uires circumit, et nulla captus dulcedine rerum, non auro cultuque deum, non moenibus urbis, effossum tumulis cupide descendit in antrum.</p> <p>(b) Lucan 10.28–33 (Alexander) ... Macetum fines latebrasque suorum deseruit uictasque patri despexit Athenas, perque Asiae populos <u>fatis urguentibus actus</u> <u>humana cum strage ruit gladiumque per omnis</u> <u>exegit gentes</u>, ignotos miscuit amnes Persarum Euphraten, Indorum sanguine Gangen</p> <p>(c) Lucan 1.146–50 (Caesar) Acer et indomitus, quo spes quoque ira uocasset, <u>ferre manum</u> et numquam temerando parcere <u>ferro</u>, successus <u>urguere</u> suos, instare <u>fauori</u> <u>numinis</u>, impellens, quidquid sibi <u>summa petenti</u> obstaret, gaudensque uiam fecisse ruina</p>	<p>(trans. Walters 2015) Undeterred... He visited the gods’ ancient temples—stale shrines Attesting Macedon’s former might—but took pleasure In nothing, not gold or godly ornaments or city walls, Before eagerly viewing the cavernous tomb.</p> <p>He abandoned Macedon’s haunts And borders and despised his father’s defeated Athens. <u>Driven through Asia’s masses by destiny’s whirlwind,</u> He waded through <u>pools of human slaughter</u> And <u>plunged his sword</u> into every nation, mixing blood In unknown rivers—dead Persians in the Euphrates, Indians bobbing in the Ganges...</p> <p>Violent, uncontrollable—<u>when ambition or anger called,</u> <u>He turned his hand unsparingly to the sword</u> And made his advances, <u>pressing Fortune’s favor.</u> Trampling everything in his way, <u>he rejoices in ruin...</u></p>
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