

Publius Clodius *Biaiothanatos*: Cicero's Oratorical Necromancy in *Pro Milone* 79

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1. Cicero, *Pro Milone* 79

Quin sic attendite, iudices. Nempe haec est quaestio de interitu P. Clodi. Fingite animis—liberae sunt enim nostrae cogitationes, et quae volunt sic intuentur ut ea cernimus quae videmus fingite igitur cogitatione imaginem huius condicionis meae, si possim efficere ut Milonem absolvatis, sed ita, si P. Clodius revixerit. Quid vultu extimuitis? quonam modo ille vos vivus adficeret, quos mortuus inani cogitatione percussit? Quid! si ipse Cn. Pompeius, qui ea virtute ac fortuna est ut ea potuerit semper quae nemo praeter illum, si is, inquam, potuisset aut quaestionem de morte P. Clodi ferre aut ipsum ab inferis excitare, atrum putatis potius facturum fuisse? Etiam si propter amicitiam vellet illum ab inferis evocare, propter rem publicam non fecisset. Eius igitur mortis sedetis ultores, cuius vitam si putetis per vos restitui posse, nolitis; et de eius nece lata quaestio est, qui si lege eadem reviviscere posset, lata lex numquam esset. Huius ergo interfecto si esset, in confitendo ab eisne poenam timeret quos liberavisset?

But listen thus, O judges! This investigation is, without doubt, about the death of Publius Clodius. Imagine in your minds – for our thoughts are free, and they imagine what they wish and observe in such a way that we discern the things we see. Therefore place in your imagination a picture of this situation of mine, if I am able to bring it about that you absolve Milo, but this too, if Publius Clodius was still alive. What dread have you shown on your countenance? For how would that man, if alive, affect you, when even now, being dead, he has struck you by the mere thought? What? If Gnaeus Pompey himself, who is a man of such virtue and fortune that he was always able [to do] those things which nobody before him [was able to do], if that Pompey, I say, had been able to either carry out an investigation concerning the death of Clodius (which he has in fact done) or summon forth that man from the dead, which of the two do you think he would have preferred to do? Even if he were willing to evoke that man from the dead because of friendship, he would not have done it on account of the republic. You, therefore, are sitting as avengers of the death of that man, whose life you would not want [to resurrect] even if you were to think that it was possible for his life to be revived through your own actions; and a judicial inquiry concerning his death was carried out, and if he was able to come to life again by this same law, that law never would have been passed. Therefore, would the killer of this man, if there were to be one, fear punishment of confessing [the deed] from those whom he had saved?

2. Pliny the Younger, *Epistulae* 7.27.1

Igitur perquam velim scire, esse phantasmata et habere propriam figuram numenque aliquod putes an inania et vana ex metu nostro imaginem accipere. Ego ut esse credam in primis eo ducor, quod audio accidisse Curtio Rufo.

Thus I would thoroughly like to know if you think that there are ghosts and whether you think that they possess a particular shape or any sort of divine essence, or that they possess the image from our fear as empty and void shadows. I myself am led to believe in [them] from what I hear happened to Curtius Rufus.

3. Ghosts and Ghost Evocation at Rome

Some evidence of the nature of those dead by violence: *Od.* 11.59, *Pl. Phd* 81d, *Tert. De anim.* 56.2
Witches and Necromancers: *Od.* 10.488-540, 11.13-149, *Hor. Sat.* 1.8, *Epod.* 5, 17, *Tib.* 1.2.42-66, 1.5.39-59, *Prop.* 4.5.1-18, 65-78, *Ov. Am.* 6.83-94, *Luc. Phar.* 6.413-587

4. Cicero, *In Vatinius* 14

quoniam omnium rerum magnarum ab dis immortalibus principia ducuntur, volo ut mihi respondeas tu, qui te Pythagoreum soles dicere et hominis doctissimi nomen tuis immanibus et barbaris moribus praetendere, quae te tanta pravitas mentis tenuerit, qui tantus furor ut, cum inaudita ac nefaria sacra susceperis, cum inferorum animas elicere, cum puerorum extis deos manis mactare soleas, auspicia quibus haec urbs condita est, quibus omnis res publica atque imperium tenetur, contempseris...?

Since the origins of every great thing comes from the immortal gods, I want you to tell me who is in the habit of calling you Pythagorean and spreading the name of that most learned man with your monstrous and barbaric character; what awful crookedness held your conscience, how much fury did you have that you would scorn the auspices that founded this city and that allow this republic to hold authority, while you were practicing unspeakable and nefarious rites, while you were summoning forth the spirits of the dead, while you were in the habit of sacrificing the entrails of boys to the gods of the underworld...?

5. Cicero, *Pro Milone* 91

Et sunt qui de via Appia querantur, taceant de curia! et qui ab eo spirante forum putent potuisse defendi, cuius non restiterit cadaveri curia! Excitate, excitare ipsum, si potestis, a mortuis. Frangetis impetum vivi, cuius vix sustinetis furias insepulti? Nisi vero sustinuistis eos qui cum facibus ad curiam cucurrerunt, cum falcibus ad Castoris, cum gladiis toto foro volitarunt. Caedi vidistis populum Romanum, contionem gladiis disturbari, cum audiretur silentio M. Caelius...

And there are some who complain about the Appian Way but remain silent about the Senate house! And there are others who reckon that the forum could have been saved by that man [Clodius] if he were alive and breathing, but because of his corpse the Senate house no longer stands! Awaken him, awaken him from the dead, if you can. Will you be able to keep in check his assault while he is alive when you can hardly contain his rage while unburied? Unless you did indeed support those who were running to the Senate house with torches, to the temple of Castor with scythes, and who were flying all over the forum with swords in hand. You saw the Roman people cut down, the assembly disrupted with swords while Marcus Caelius listened in silence...

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