Of *Meretrices* and Men: The Tragicomic

Construction of Clodia’s Reputation in the *Pro Caelio*

I. Cicero, *Pro Caelio* §34

Mulier, quid tibi cum Caelio, quid cum homine **adulescentulo**, quid cum alieno? Cur aut tam familiaris huic fuisti, ut aurum commodares, aut tam inimica, ut venenum timeres? …Cum ex amplissimo genere in familiam clarissimam nupsisses, cur tibi Caelius tam coniunctus fuit? cognatus, adfinis, viri tui familiaris? Nihil eorum. Quid igitur fuit nisi quaedam temeritas ac libido? …**ideo aquam adduxi, ut ea tu inceste uterere?**

Woman, what are you doing with Caelius, with this **young man**, with this stranger? Why have you been so familiar with him that you lent him gold, or such an enemy that you fear poison? …When you, from a very distinguished clan, had married into a very famous family, why was Caelius so connected with you? Was he a relative, a neighbor, a friend of your husband? He was none of these. Therefore, what was this, except some rashness and lust? …**For this reason did I bring water [to Rome], so that you might use it unchastely?**

II. Cicero, *Pro Caelio* §49

Si quae non nupta mulier domum suam patefecerit omnium cupiditati palamque sese in meretricia vita collocarit… ut non solum meretrix, sed etiam proterva meretrix procaxque videatur: **cum hac si qui adulescens forte fuerit, utrum hic tibi, L. Herenni, adulter an amator, expugnare pudicitiam an explere libidinem voluisse videatur?**

If an unmarried woman throws open her home to the desires of all and openly employs herself in the life of a prostitute… so that she might seem to be not only a prostitute, but also a shameless and wanton prostitute: **if some young man by chance was with this woman, would he seem to you, Lucius Herennius, to be an adulterer or a lover, to have wished to violate chastity or to fulfill his desire?**

III. Ennius, *Medea exsul* frag. 253-61

Utinam ne in nemore Pelio securibus

caesae accidissent abiegnae ad terram trabes,

neve inde navis inchoandi exordium

coepisset quae nunc nominatur nomine

Argo, quia Argivi in ea delecti viri

vecti petebant pellem inauratam arietis

Colchis imperio regis Peliae per dolum;

**nam numquam era errans mea domo**

efferret pedem

**Medea animo aegro amore saevo saucia**

If only the firwood timbers had not fallen to the ground in the Pelian forest, cut by axes, and if only thereupon the ship, which is now known as the Argo, had not begun its commencement of beginning, since the chosen Argive men carried in it were seeking the golden fleece of the ram from Colchis through trickery by order of King Pelias; **for never would that erring mistress, Medea, sick in her heart, wounded by a savage love,** have set foot outside her home.

IV. Cicero, *Pro Caelio* §18

…Ac longius quidem mihi contexere hoc carmen liceret:

Nam numquam era errans

**hanc molestiam nobis exhiberet**

Medea animo aegra, amore saevo saucia.

Sic enim, iudices, reperietis, quod, cum ad id loci venero, ostendam, hanc **Palatinam Medeam** migrationemque hanc adulescenti causam sive malorum omnium sive potius sermonum fuisse.

And indeed may it be permitted for me to continue this quotation further:

For an erring mistress would never

**have made this trouble for us,**

Medea, sick in her heart, wounded by a savage love.

For thus, judges, will you find that which I will show you, when I will have come to that part of my speech, that this **Medea of the Palatine** and the young man’s change of address have been the reason of all his troubles or more, of the gossip.

V. Cicero, *Pro Caelio* §67

Praegestit animus iam **videre primum lautos iuvenes** mulieris beatae ac nobilis familiares, **deinde fortes viros** ab imperatrice in insidiis atque in praesidio balnearum collocatos; ex quibus requiram, quem ad modum latuerint aut ubi, **alveusne ille an equus Troianus fuerit,** qui tot invictos viros **muliebre bellum gerentes** tulerit ac texerit.

Now my mind delights **to see** **first these elegant young men**, friends of a wealthy and noble woman, **and then to see those brave men** stationed by their mistress in ambush and in defense; I’ll ask them in what way or where they hid, **whether it was that bathtub or the Trojan horse,** which carried and protected so many invincible men **waging war for the sake of a woman**.

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