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CICERO'S *PRO CAELIO* 33–34 AND
APPIUS CLAUDIUS' *ORATIO DE PYRRHO*

Discussions of Appius Claudius the Blind in the *Pro Caelio*, from at least Quintilian on, have tended to focus on the technique of Cicero's *prosopopoeia*—its tone and its rhetorical purpose within the larger speech.¹ Its tone, Quintilian states, places it in the grand style, while its purpose is to “rebuke her [that is, Clodia’s] vices” (3.8.54). More recent discussions have also considered the humor of Cicero’s impersonation, and the role of humor in the *Pro Caelio* as a whole.² This note contributes a point to the discussion of the tone and the rhetorical purpose of the *prosopopoeia* by exploring a largely unnoticed aspect of the passage’s comedy.³ Specifically, I argue that Cicero’s Appius Claudius alludes to the most famous speech he ever gave—a purported copy of which survived in the late Republic—to strengthen his appeal, and to add humor to it.

Cicero’s use of the ancient Appius Claudius Caecus (censor in 312 B.C.E., consul twice, in 307 and 296, and builder of the Via Appia and the Aqua Appia) against Clodia in general made good sense; as R. G. Austin noted in the third edition of his authoritative commentary, it was appropriate to call upon “this fine old Roman gentleman to rebuke a flighty descendant, to whom his ways would no doubt seem curiously fusty.”⁴ But in addition to the vast gulf that separated the blind censor from the “Medea of the Palatine,” there was a second, more precise reason for Cicero’s choice. Appius Claudius was well known for appearing before Rome’s senators in

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1. Quintilian makes over twenty references to the speech, the most important of which concern Cicero’s *prosopopoeia*. See especially *Inst.* 3.8.54 (on the purpose of invoking Appius and Clodius) and 12.10.61 (on the tone of the passage in which Appius appears). For modern discussions of tone and purpose, see, e.g., Geffcken 1973, 18; Classen 1973, 79–80; Stroh 1975, 280–81; Wiseman 1985, 84; and Dufallo 2001, 119–42.

2. See especially Geffcken 1973, but also, e.g., May 1988, 105–16, and Riggsby 1999, 100–105.

3. The idea presented here is briefly hinted at by Dufallo in a footnote, but not fully explored: see Dufallo 2001, p. 133, n. 34.

4. Austin (1960) on *Cael.* 33.2. Discussions of Appius Claudius Caecus include *RE*, s.v. “Claudius” (91) (Münzer), with references to the sources, and Cornell 1995, 373–77, with references to earlier studies. A particularly important source for his career and the place it held in the Romans’ conception of their history is his *elogium* from the Forum of Augustus, a full copy of which survives from Arles, and fragments from the original in Rome (see *Inscr. Ital.* 13.3, nos. 79 and 12, respectively). The Arles text mentions *pacem fieri cum [P]yrrho rege prohibuit*.

279 B.C.E., in the later part of his life, when he had gone blind, incredulous at the senate's willingness to strike a peace with King Pyrrhus of Epirus.⁵ Cicero's Appius refers to this occasion (and so reminds jurors of its significance in his career) when he asks: "Was it for this that I broke up the peace with Pyrrhus, so that you might daily strike bargains dealing with your loathsome practices?" (*ideone ego pacem Pyrrhi diremi ut tu amorum turpissimorum cotidie foedera ferires . . . ?*). At the senate's meeting, later generations would recall, he gave a famous speech that persuaded the *patres* to change their minds and continue the fight against Pyrrhus—in which, of course, the Romans finally prevailed.⁶

The earliest attested reference to the speech is a fragment from Ennius' *Annales* (frag. 199–200 Skutsch) quoted in Cicero's *De senectute* (16):⁷

ad Appi Claudii senectutem accedebat etiam, ut caecus esset; tamen is cum sententia senatus inclinaret ad pacem cum Pyrrho foedusque faciendum, non dubitavit dicere illa quae versibus persecutus est Ennius,

"quo vobis mentes, rectae quae stare solebant

antehac, dementes sese flexere viai . . . ?"

ceteraque gravissime; notum enim vobis carmen est, et tamen ipsius Appi exstat oratio.

To the old age of Appius Claudius it was also added that he should be blind; nevertheless, when the opinion of the senate was inclined towards peace and a treaty with Pyrrhus, he did not hesitate to say those famous words that Ennius related,

"Where have your minds wandered off to

in madness, which before this used to stand firm?"

and so on, in most severe style. The poem is well known to you, and anyway Appius' own speech survives.

Ennius' version of the speech was obviously poetic; the lines quoted in *De senectute* in fact imitate Hecuba's protest against Priam in Book 24 of the *Iliad*.⁸ The *Annales*, nonetheless, was a principal means by which Romans in Cicero's day would have been familiar with the speech (witness Cicero's allusion to it), although a prose copy of it, as Cicero tells us, also was known.⁹ Some modern scholars have doubted the latter's authenticity—it may have been a rhetorical elaboration of the Ennian passage (rather than, as Cicero implies, the reverse being true)—but Cicero, and presumably his contemporaries, did not have the same qualms.¹⁰ About the actual contents of the prose speech we know less, although we can be almost certain that it included a reference to the censor's blindness, since Cicero remarks that Appius was suffering from that condition when he gave his oration, and since three later versions of the speech, found in Plutarch, Appian, and the so-called *Ineditum Vaticanum*, all begin with Appius noting that, having been pained by his blindness before, he now wished that he were

5. For Appius' appearance in the senate the most important sources are Cic. *Sen.* 16, *Brut.* 55, 61; Livy, *Per.* 13; Quint. *Inst.* 2.16.7; Plut. *Pyrrh.* 18–19; App. *Sam.* frag. 10; Isid. *Etym.* 1.38.2; and *FGrH* 839 F 1.2.

6. On the fame of the speech, note, in addition to the many references in literary sources (some of which are cited in n. 5 above), Cicero's comment in *De senectute* quoted below.

7. I quote the passage, including the fragment of Ennius, as printed in the edition of Powell (1988).

8. For the imitation of Hom. *Il.* 24.201–2, see Skutsch (1985) on *Ann.* 199–200.

9. Cic. *Brut.* 61 also refers to the speech.

10. For the possibility of a (rhetorical) forgery, see, e.g., Malcovati 1955, 1, and the bibliography cited there.

deaf also, because he never expected to see or hear the senate considering such counsels.¹¹ Since, as Skutsch argues, the common elements in these three speeches are likely to go back to the *oratio* Cicero knew, it probably began similarly too.¹² If so, then, Cicero's joke that Appius Claudius "will feel the least pain, because he will not be able to see that woman [that is, Clodia]" (*minimum . . . dolorem capiet qui istam non videbit*), was a humorous allusion to the speech—and in particular, its apparently well-known beginning.

In calling on Appius Claudius to speak against Clodia, and referring to the blindness that he suffered from at the time of his speech and the ripped-up treaty, Cicero was inviting the original audience of the *Pro Caelio* to recall the censor's famous oration, the only speech of his well known in later times—though a collection of verse sayings attributed to him also circulated—and the first speech on record in the annals of oratory in Latin.¹³ The stature of Caecus, especially on that occasion, in which, blind, coming out of long retirement, he swayed the minds of the craven Roman senators and saved the city from an ignominious peace, would suggest that he—and so Cicero—had to be believed on this occasion too.¹⁴ And, if he was coming out to speak again in his blind old age, the subject must be urgent, as it had been in 279. Those who voted against him in the trial could indeed be asked: *quo vobis mentes, rectae quae stare solebant / antehac, dementes sese flexere via*(i)?

The memory of Appius Claudius' speech against the senate would make the drubbing of Clodia all the more effective too. Just as he scolded the senators, now, two hundred and fifty years later, he berates his descendant. The tone, as Quintilian suggests, is harsh, although Appius achieves this result not through any affirmative accusation, but—a point so obvious Austin probably felt he did not need to mention it—through a series of indignant questions. These are especially effective, as so often in oratory, because they cannot be answered immediately, if ever. In this regard, it is worth noting that the one sure fragment we have of Appius' speech in Ennius is a question. The prose speech Cicero and his contemporaries knew, since it seems to have had some relationship with the *Annales*, is likely to have featured rhetorical questions too: they would have contributed to the tone of high indignation for which Appius was remembered. If the later prose versions of Plutarch and Appian derive from this *oratio*, that would provide further evidence, since they also contain rhetorical questions.

Recalling what was later said about the oratory of Appius Claudius enhances our understanding of the power of Cicero's *prosopopoeia*. At the same time, the contrast between the tense senate meeting of 279 and the trial of 56, with its colorful exposé of the private life of Rome's high society, adds humor to the passage—as does the contrast between the personalities of Caecus and Clodia. This of course is also a part

11. The versions are found at Plut. *Pyrrh.* 19.1–3; App. *Sam. frag.* 10.2; *FGrH* 839 F 1.2.

12. Skutsch (1985) on *Ann.* 199–200. While Enn. *Ann.* 201 Skutsch may have been part of a longer sentence similar to that which starts off the three prose speeches, Cicero makes it clear that Ennius' version did not begin this way. It is more likely, in any case, that prose versions would derive ultimately from the prose oration, rather than from Ennius.

13. On the collection of Appius' sayings, the main evidence is Cic. *Tusc.* 4.4 and [Sall.] *Ad Caes. sen.* 1.1.2. On his speech as the first in the annals of oratory, see Cic. *Brut.* 61 and Isid. *Etym.* 1.38.2; cf. Sen. *Ep.* 114.13 and Tac. *Dial.* 18.4. Thus Appius Claudius is the first orator in Malcovati (1955).

14. Thus, one can be more precise than Dufallo (2001, p. 133, n. 34): "Appius' reputation as a persuasive orator adds further to the authority he is able to bestow on Cicero's own speech."

of the orator's strategy, in a speech that was delivered on the opening day of the Ludi Megalenses.¹⁵ For all the seriousness that Quintilian notes, there is parody too, as Cicero makes light of this famous moment in Rome's past, and updates the contents of Claudius' speech for his own generation of Clodii.¹⁶

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15. On the importance of seeing the *Pro Caelio* in the context of the Ludi Megalenses (carefully referred to by Cicero at the start of his speech, *diebus festis ludisque publicis*), see Geffcken 1973, 1–8, and, from a different perspective, Salzman 1982, 299–304.

16. Geffcken (1973, p. 19, n. 2) points out Cicero's interest in "comparing contemporary Clodians to their illustrious ancestor" (see *In Clodium et Curionem* frag. 24 and *Mil.* 17), while also noticing (18) distinctively Ciceronian rhetorical features in the *prosopopoeia*.

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MEN FROM BEFORE THE MOON: THE RELEVANCE OF STATIUS *THEBAID* 4.275–84 TO PARTHENOPAEUS AND HIS ARCADIAN CONTINGENT

This paper seeks to explore the relevance of the detail in the catalogue of Argive forces at *Thebaid* 4.32–308. Specifically, it will focus on Statius' side excursion into primeval Arcadian customs at lines 275–84, arguing that this seemingly irrelevant digression contributes to the wider themes of the work, especially the idea of decline. While the view of the *Thebaid* as a copy of the *Aeneid*, attractive only to textual critics and doctoral students, may be dated, the poem has not yet received the full scrutiny it deserves. In particular, there remains much to be done on its inner structure, the care with which Statius builds up themes and characters through even apparently minor observations. As this paper hopes to show, passages may set up resonances that reach far beyond their immediate locality and subtly shape our response.