

I. CICERO'S PERSONIFICATION OF APPIUS CLAUDIUS CAECUS

IN 56 B.C., Cicero's young friend M. Caelius Rufus had to stand trial in Rome. One of the five charges brought against him was for having plotted to poison his former mistress Clodia.¹ In Cicero's speech in defence of Caelius we are given to understand that the famous, not to say notorious (mainly on account of Cicero's *Pro Caelio*), Clodia was behind the accusations.² Caelius was acquitted in the end (Austin 1960: viii). Ancient and modern commentators on the speech agree that one of its most powerful passages occurred when Cicero employed the oratorical technique of "personification" or "speech in character" (*prosopopoeia*) and for a while pretended, apparently both by gestures and by voice, to be one of Clodia's most famous ancestors, the censor Appius Claudius Caecus.³ The evocation of past virtues and the contrast to the behaviour of Clodia was, it has been argued, so powerful and effective that the jurors must have been persuaded to disregard any charges and allegations emanating from Clodia's quarter.⁴ The end of that fictive speech of Appius Claudius Caecus is the reason for this note. In a tricolon, Appius evokes three of his own major accomplishments, while for each of them pointing out a reason why Clodia should be ashamed of herself:

*ideone ego pacem Pyrrhi diremi, ut tu amorum turpissimorum cotidie foedera ferires, ideo aquam adduxi, ut ea tu incestu uterere, ideo viam munivi, ut eam tu alienis viris comitata celebrares?*⁵ (Cic. *Cael.* 34)

I am indebted to Ms Aara Suksi for improving my English language and to my colleague Jonathan Burgess for useful hints as to style and content.

¹ On the charges, see Austin 1960: 152–154 (Appendix v).

² See, e.g., Austin 1960: viii: "Clodia was the real driving force behind it [the trial]." For some good arguments against a major role played by Clodia see Dorey 1958. Whether Clodia's role in the affair was anything like what Cicero claims it to have been is of less interest here. It is evident that the primary purpose of Cicero's oratory was to discredit Clodia, whatever her role was in setting up the trial. On ancient and modern misconceptions of the "real" Clodia see Hillard 1981; and Skinner 1983 with previous literature.

³ See Austin 1960: 90–91 with references to ancient commentators.

⁴ Austin 1960: 91: "even by the end of §38 he must have known that he had won the case, with Clodia laughed out of court." In §36 Cicero impersonated Clodia's brother Clodius, and in §§37–38 he put forward mock reproaches to Caelius while appearing in the guise of various types of stern fathers.

⁵ Translation by Gardner 1958: 449: "Was it for this that I tore up the peace with Pyrrhus, that thou mightest daily strike bargains about thine infamous amours? Was it for this that I brought water to Rome, that thou mightest use it after thy incestuous debauches? Was it for this that I built up a road, that thou mightest frequent it with a train of other women's husbands?"

The three pairs of main clause plus contrasting subordinate final clause seem to be of variable quality. The first and the last of these provide a rather striking effect.⁶ The ending of the peace with Pyrrhus meant, of course, the annulment of the *foedus* with him,⁷ while Clodia on her part was all too eager to enter into *foedera* because of her *amores* with certain characters called *turpissimi*. Appius Claudius Caecus' construction of the Via Appia had been immortalized by the very name of the road. The allegation that Clodia now was desecrating this deed of her ancestor by walking on it in dubious company and for dubious purposes, indeed by "walking the street," creates a very vivid picture. (In fact, Cicero himself seems to have liked it so much that he used a similar contrast in his *pro Milone*, directed against Clodius, the notorious brother of Clodia.⁸)

The reference to the building of the Aqua Appia is natural enough, but the middle clause does not appear to be very satisfactory. What ambiguous or repulsive use of water is being alluded to with respect to Clodia? If the use of waterbeds had been common among the Romans, this allusion would have had some force. In the absence of such pleasures, it seems baffling that the use of water, plain and simple, should have been connected to Clodia's allegedly loose morals. So far, most translators and commentators of the passage have dutifully rendered the passage [*aqua*] *inceste uterere* as "immoral use of water" or the like, without providing any further clue.⁹ Recently there have appeared some relatively blunt renderings of Cicero's phrase, such as "Was it for this that I brought water to Rome, that you could wash yourself after impure copulations?" or the like.¹⁰ This might spell out what other interpreters have had in mind, but still does not answer our question. It is not a literal translation, and while washing ideally would follow

⁶ Cf. Haury 1955: 147; Geffcken 1973: 18: "The concluding sentence of this impersonation is a splendid period of three parallel main clauses, each followed by a purpose clause, adorned with anaphora, alliteration, and intricate internal assonance . . ." For further praise see Bellardi 1975: 20; Fuhrmann 1980: 11; Wiseman 1985: 84; and Kennedy 1994: 139: "There are two admirable *prosopopoeiae*, first of the old Appius Claudius rising from the grave . . ." Less impressed, while admitting the impact the passage had in antiquity, is Classen 1973: 80, n. 90: "Die klimaxartig gestaffelten Gegensätze am Schluss des Paragraphen 34 muten uns heute frostig an; sie müssen den antiken Hörer besonders beeindruckt haben." Cicero's *prosopopoeia* is lauded by, e.g., Quint. *Inst.* 3.8.54; 12.10.61.

⁷ On the peace proposal of Pyrrhus, see Franke 1989: 471. See also Cic. *Sen.* 15–16: *tamen is [App. Claudius], cum sententia senatus inclinaret ad pacem cum Pyrrho foedusque faciendum, non dubitaret dicere . . .*

⁸ Cic. *Mil.* 17: *proinde quasi Appius ille Caecus viam muniverit, non qua populus uteretur, sed ubi impune sui posteris [referring to P. Clodius] latrocinarentur.*

⁹ See Bellardi 1975: 575: "l'acqua . . . per i tuoi impudichi bisogni"; Cousin 1962: 111: "N'ai-je donc amené les eaux dans cette ville que pour t'en permettre un immoral usage?"; Fuhrmann 1980 (*ad loc.*): "deswegen Wasser in die Stadt geleitet, damit du es zu unsauberen Zwecken gebrauchst?"; cf. Geffcken 1973: 19: "Rome's first aqueduct [juxtaposed] with Clodia's private immoral use of its water." For the Loeb translation, see Gardner 1958, quoted above, n. 5.

¹⁰ The quote is from Evans 1991: 22; cf. Grant 1969: 186: "Did I bring water to Rome only that you should have something to wash yourself with after your impure copulations?"

after sexual intercourse, it is not really an act that is normally connected with intercourse or something that is considered an integral part of sexual activity.

One line of inquiry to elucidate Cicero's phrase might be to focus on the fact that sexual intercourse in antiquity was sometimes thought to pollute, and that this pollution could be washed off.¹¹ However, the evidence from the Roman world for ritual cleansing with water after sexual "pollution" is very meagre and different in character from the case involving Clodia.¹² A decisive point against this line of thought is that water in a Roman cultic context had to be derived *vivo flumine*. Water from cisterns or conduits was not pure enough and could not, therefore, be used.¹³ Thus Clodia could never have used water from the Aqua Appia to cleanse herself from pollution, as Cicero and his listeners would have known well. Above all, Cicero's phrase *aqua inceste uti* decisively disproves this line of thought. How could the washing off of pollution be labelled *inceste*? If Cicero had had pollution and cleansing in mind, he would have said something to that effect. There must be a better way of linking use of water to meretricious behaviour.

Perhaps no further explanation is called for. Perhaps Cicero could think of nothing better. He may have been facing a difficult task, once he decided on using three of Appius Claudius Caecus' greatest achievements as examples. The three deeds he chose were among the most famous feats of Caecus, if not the most famous of all.¹⁴ While for the war with Pyrrhus and the Via Appia witty

¹¹ I owe this line of thought to one of the anonymous referees. Some *leges sacrae* from the Greek world ruled that those who had engaged in sexual activity (whether promiscuous or not) were prevented from entering sanctuaries. Occasionally either a bath or a sprinkling with water was required before the polluted person could be admitted. On pollution and purification in the Greek world in relation to the sexual sphere, see above all Parker 1983: 74–75. Guettel Cole (1992: 108) gives four examples of water being used for purification after intercourse, all from the Eastern Mediterranean and with only one example (from Lindos) later than the second century B.C. (*IG XII.1 789* = Sokolowski 1969: no. 139, line 14; second century A.D.).

¹² For a few sparse mentions see Wissowa 1912: 219, 301; and Latte 1960: 49–50. Ziehen (1937: 857) quotes only one case of ritual cleansing, namely after the killing of a Roman citizen (Plut. *Sull.* 32). "Reinheitsvorschriften" in Roman culture clearly were not identical to Greek ones and the attested examples pertain to agricultural practice. It is difficult to see how these should have been relevant to Clodia's case. Parker (1983: 77) identifies Roman rules for abstinence and purification with water after intercourse in connection with olive growing, bee-keeping (Colum. 9.14.3: *nec nisi lotus ad eas [scil. apes] accedat*), and the preparation of food (Colum. 12.4.3: *debere eos flumine aut perenni aqua . . . ablui*). For the last passage see the following argument. That sources of water, where ritual cleansing might have taken place, often can be found in connection with Roman temples is another matter and not in dispute; for this see Bruun 1993: 225–226 with some further bibliography.

¹³ Wissowa 1912: 219: "Das beständig fliess ende Wasser natürlicher Quellen, die *aqua iugis* spielt im Ritual des altrömischen Kultus eine hervorragende Rolle; denn für alle sakrale Zwecke, namentlich für die Reinigung vor dem Opfer oder zur Lustration nach vorangegangener Befleckung, ist nur das *vivo flumine* geschöpfte Wasser brauchbar, nicht das aus Cisternen oder Leitungen entnommene" (my emphasis).

¹⁴ For how the Augustan age looked upon the deeds of Appius Claudius Caecus, see, e.g., the *elogium* displayed in the Forum of Augustus under the first *princeps* (*ILS* 54): *Appius Claudius C. f.*

contrasts drawn from Clodia's (alleged) behaviour readily presented themselves, perhaps, when mentioning the aqueduct, Cicero had to be content with a vague general insinuation and to hope that the listener's (or reader's) imagination would supply the rest.

Such an explanation is not very satisfactory. It seems somewhat odd that Cicero would not have been able to rise to his usual standards in the concluding sentence of one of the pivotal moments of the whole speech. To be sure, the *Pro Caelio* as we have it has been said to be closer to the originally delivered *actio* than any other of Cicero's preserved speeches (Heinze 1925: 257). But being closer to the original spoken word does not mean that it should reflect less careful planning on Cicero's part. A passage like the personification of Appius Claudius Caecus with its concluding comparison could never have been left to an improvisation of the moment.

This being the case, it is interesting that there is some information concerning water and immorality in the late Republic which, when brought to bear upon this passage, lends it much greater force.

II. CAELIUS RUFUS' SPEECH ON ILLEGAL WATER CONDUITS

In Frontinus' *De aquaeductu Urbis Romae*, written about A.D. 100, there is a passage where the writer complains about the various illegal uses to which public water in Rome was being diverted (at least before Frontinus took over as *curator aquarum*):

*ac de vitiis eiusmodi nec plura nec melius dici possunt, quam a Caelio Rufo dicta sunt in ea contione, cui titulus est "de aquis." quae nunc nos omnia simili licentia usurpata utinam non per offensas probaremus: inriguos agros, tabernas, cenacula etiam, corruptelas denique omnes perpetuis salientibus instructos invenimus.*¹⁵ (Frontinus *Aq.* 76.1–2)

Only about fifteen years ago it was realized, by R. H. Rodgers, that in *Aq.* 76.2 we are apparently dealing with a direct citation from the speech of Caelius Rufus that Frontinus mentions.¹⁶ This passage, then, contains interesting revelations concerning the use of water in the 50s B.C. Caelius, who apparently

Caecus, censor, cos. bis, dict., interrex III, pr. II, aed. cur. II, q., tr. mil. III. Complura oppida de Samnitibus cepit; Sabinorum et Tuscorum exercitum fudit; pacem fieri cum Pyrrho rege prohibuit. In censura viam Appiam stravit et aquam in urbem adduxit; aedem Bellonae fecit. For an exhaustive treatment of the life of Appius Claudius Caecus, see Münzer 1899.

¹⁵"Concerning wrongs of this sort, however, nothing more or better can be said than the words spoken by Caelius Rufus in his public speech entitled *On the Waters*: 'Would that we were not proving, by provoking indignant reactions, that all these wrongs are being habitually practiced with comparable impunity: we find fields being watered, taverns, even garrets, and lastly, all the brothels equipped with constantly flowing taps'." (Translation by Evans 1994: 33).

¹⁶Rodgers 1982; accepted by, e.g., Evans 1994: 33.

gave the speech in 50 B.C. when he was curule aedile,¹⁷ is claiming as the worst misappropriation of public water in Rome the fact that *omnes corruptelae*, all the brothels, were enjoying an illegal supply of running water.

Could this be what Cicero is referring to when he attacks Clodia for using water *inceste*? Is it conceivable that his listeners and readers would have been able without difficulty to make the connection to the water supply of brothels, once Cicero had uttered the keywords “water” and “immorality”?

There is of course the chronological dimension to consider. The *Pro Caelio* was delivered six years before Caelius gave his speech on the abusive use of public water. Can we really assume that Cicero’s audience in 56 B.C. would have been susceptible to the interpretation of Appius Claudius’ allusion which has been suggested here, when the misappropriation of water by brothels was made public in a speech given in 50 B.C.? This issue need not unduly disturb us. Presumably, the misappropriation of water by various parties, brothels included, was not something that was discovered only by Caelius, and only in 50 B.C. The (illegal) use of water by brothels might well have been common knowledge long before that. One gets the strong impression that those in charge of the administration of the aqueducts performed very unevenly.

Long periods of neglect and laxity were followed by efforts to curb licence and illegalities. Frontinus testifies that this was so even in the late 90s A.D., although one would have expected matters to have been better organized in the Empire than during the Late Republic. During the Republic, there were a number of occasions when administrators tried to solve problems that had accumulated previously.¹⁸ An allusion by Cicero in 56 B.C. could, therefore, have been perfectly understandable to his audience, although our sources do not contain references to misappropriations by brothels before Caelius’ speech.

The contrast between Appius Claudius bringing water to Rome for the public good and Clodia using water for her brothel would be a powerful one.¹⁹ And these allegations about use of water in a brothel, if that is what we are dealing with,

¹⁷ On Caelius’ career, see Austin 1960: v–xiii. In a letter to Cicero sent in February 50 B.C. Caelius writes: *nisi ego cum tabernariis et aquariis pugnarem* . . . (Cic. *Fam.* 8.6.4 = Shackleton Bailey 1977: no. 88).

¹⁸ On the illegal use of water in Frontinus’ time, see the evidence collected in Bruun 1991: 55, 108; and Frontinus *Aq.* 64–75 (*passim*). One also notes expressions such as *neglegentia longi temporis* (*Aq.* 130.1). Earlier mentions of illegal appropriation of water at Rome are Livy 39.44.4 (183 B.C.; the censors shut off private outlets, so one must infer that they were illegal); Plut. *Cato Maj.* 19 refers to the same event. Pliny *NH* 31.42 mentions that both Aqua Virgo and Aqua Marcia were illegally tapped, while Tac. *Ann.* 15.43 wrote about *aqua privatorum licentia intercepta* in connection with the fire of Rome in A.D. 64.

¹⁹ Whether Clodia actually owned a private water supply by legal right or not is irrelevant to Cicero’s rhetorical figure. It is possible that her house did possess a private conduit. Frontinus informs us that in the old days (*apud veteres*), which must mean before 11 B.C. when several new *senatus consulta* regulating the *cura aquarum* were carried, nobody was permitted to divert water from the public water supply except to *fullonicae* and to (public) baths (*Aq.* 94.3–4). But he adds that *aliquid et in domos principum civitatis dabatur concedentibus reliquis* (*Aq.* 94.6). Clodia’s deceased husband Q. Metellus

would be in line with Appius Claudius' two other accusations against Clodia, which all focus on morally questionable activities. Indeed, one of Cicero's primary purposes in his speech is to discredit Clodia as a *meretrix* and, therefore, as a person not to be trusted. This strategy is outlined in the very first sentence of the speech: *adulescentem . . . oppugnari . . . opibus meretricibus . . .* (Cael. 1).²⁰

III. CICERO, BATHING, MORALITY, AND BAIAE

Are there any alternative explanations for our passage? What if Cicero by *aqua inceste uterere* is simply referring to an underlying assumption that bathing in itself is an immoral activity?

There is some evidence that bathing was considered morally reproachable in the Roman world.²¹ But the issue in the texts that are most commonly cited to show this, such as Tac. *Agr.* 21 and Sen. *Ep.* 86, is clearly not one of sexual matters, but involves the notion that bathing is an unnecessary luxury that contributes to softening the race—thus Tacitus puts baths in the same context as porticoes and dinner *convivia*—or that, while occasional bathing in modest surroundings is indeed part of the Roman cultural heritage, luxurious and ostentatious bath-buildings are to be condemned—thus Seneca, who compares baths from the time of Scipio Africanus to those of his own days.

The chronological aspect is also important here. Both Seneca and Tacitus are considerably later than Clodia and Cicero. To cite from a recent work by F. Yegül, "It is noteworthy that the generations hypercritical toward the increasing material comforts of life, and of the baths in particular, belonged to the early decades of the empire. Cicero, of the late republic, had no quarrels with the modest bathing establishments of his day."²² There is indeed no reason for believing that Cicero would have despised the taking of baths as such. To give just two random examples from his own life, in 47 B.C., some nine years after the trial of Caelius, he directed Terentia to install a new bathtub (*labrum*) in the baths (*balineum*) in his Tusculan villa (*Fam.* 14.20), while in 46 B.C. he looked forward to taking baths

Celer, *cos.* 60 B.C., might have been one of those distinguished citizens who by the concession of his peers received a private conduit. Whether the right to private water could have been passed on to his heir is another matter; presumably not, according to contemporary law (for which see *Aq.* 107.1).

²⁰ Important for our argument is whether a *meretrix* (OLD s.v. "courtesan, kept woman") can be connected to a brothel proper, or whether *meretrix* means just an immoral woman in general. The connection is clearly there, as can be seen from the fact that *meretrices* are associated with *lenones* (OLD s.v. "brothel keeper, bawd, a procurer") and *lenocinium* (OLD s.v. "the action or profession of a pander, pandering, brothel-keeping"). Moreover, this is the case in speeches of Cicero himself, see, e.g., *Verr.* 1.101: *homo . . . qui ante quaesturam cum meretricibus lenonibusque vixisset*; *Verr.* 3.6: *potest animo aequo istius cotidiana adulteria, meretriciam disciplinam, domesticum lenocinium videre*?

²¹ See, e.g., examples given by Dunbabin 1989: 6–7. The same point was made earlier by Kajanto 1969: 365–367.

²² Yegül 1992: 40; see 40–43 for "Bathing and Morality." The earliest Latin source condemning the softening effect of baths mentioned by Kajanto (1969: 366) is Livy 23.18.12 (Hannibal's army at Capua).

with his friend Papirius Paetus.²³ Cicero would hardly have wanted to impress on his hearers at Caelius' trial the notion that the taking of baths as such was reproachable, nor would he have expected them to think along such lines.

Cicero's views and innuendos regarding visits to the fashionable seaside resort of Baiae in Campania might be a different matter. On several occasions when he describes what constitutes an immoral life-style, he refers to visits to Baiae, a town notorious for its loose morals and renowned for its baths, as in the phrase *qui nullum convivium renuerit, qui in hortis fuerit, qui unguenta sumpserit, qui Baias vidit* (*Cael.* 27).²⁴ However, the expression [*aqua*] *inceste uterere* cannot refer to lecherous life at the Campanian seaside, because the contrast to Appius Claudius' building of the Aqua Appia must necessarily be something that takes place in Rome itself.

But what if Cicero was not referring to the Campanian town, when in his speech he repeatedly mentioned Baiae as relating to Clodia's immoral behaviour, but was using *Baias* as a metaphor for "taking baths" or "a bathing establishment" in general? Indeed, the reputation of the baths at Baiae was such that the word *Baias* eventually, during the imperial period, was sometimes used as a synonym for "splendid baths," as can be seen, for instance, in inscriptions. But the inscriptions are regularly late, and so too are most literary sources for this metaphorical use.²⁵ It must be questioned whether the metaphorical use would have been common enough already in Cicero's days to be grasped by his listeners.

Nevertheless, the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* lists one instance precisely from the *Pro Caelio* as "appellativo pro balneo," namely §38: *cuius [= Clodia] in hortos, domum, Baias . . . libidines omnes commearant*.²⁶ But I have not found support for this suggestion,²⁷ and it is not very plausible. In the *Pro Caelio*, Cicero refers to Baiae several times,²⁸ and it is difficult to see why, among such a number of direct references, in one case we would have to assume a metaphorical use.

Thus there is no reason to believe that Cicero was generally adverse to the use of water for bathing. Therefore, it is more likely that he had something particular in mind when he, in the guise of Appius Caecus, accused Clodia of using water in an immoral way.

²³ Cic. *Fam.* 9.16.9: *ego tibi unum sumptum afferam, quod balneum calfacias oportebit*.

²⁴ On the notion of loose morals at Baiae in the late Republic, see, e.g., Varro *Sat. Men.* 44 (Astbury): (*Bais*) *quod non solum innubae fierunt communis, sed etiam veteres repuerascunt et multi pueri puellascunt*.

²⁵ See Dunbabin 1989: 14, and *TLL* 2.1683–84. A new early-medieval example is presented by Messina 1993: 201.

²⁶ See *TLL* 2.1683. Two other passages are cited as evidence for this interpretation: Cic. *Att.* 11.6.6, and 12.40.3. But modern scholarship is inclined to regard these passages as referring to real villas on the coast. See the translations and the comment in Shackleton Bailey 1966: 19, 141, and 274.

²⁷ See, e.g., Austin 1960: 101: "here it plainly means a residence"; Skinner 1983: 286, who includes *Cael.* 38 among the other straightforward references to Baiae.

²⁸ Cic. *Cael.* 27, 35, 38, 47, and 49.

IV. CLODIA, BATHS, AND PROSTITUTES

There might be one more objection to the suggestion of this paper yet to be overcome. A fair part of Cicero's speech is actually devoted to events that take place in a public bath, as no one familiar with it is likely to forget. The farcical depiction of how Clodia's helpers would have been spying on Licinius, an assistant of Caelius, as he allegedly prepared to hand over a poison jar to Clodia's slaves is preceded by an explanation of how Clodia had managed to introduce her helpers into the Saenian baths. Dressed in toga and *calceati*, they would not have been admitted into the interior of the baths, *nisi forte mulier potens quadrantaria illa permutatione familiaris facta erat balneatori* (Cael. 62). Cicero is implying that Clodia had used more than just her feminine charm in order to persuade the steward of the baths.²⁹ Although Cicero presumably is exaggerating the events in the Saenian baths, one can hardly doubt that something took place there—his convoluted allusions, which sometimes are difficult to follow for a later reader, make it probable that a real event known to his listeners lay behind it all.³⁰ But did it also involve Clodia, and could her actions in connection with the episode in the Saenian baths have accounted for the accusation of *aqua inceste uterere*? It has been pointed out that prostitutes seem to have operated in Roman public baths.³¹ But here, as in the case of the questionable morality in connection with bathing, we are dealing with evidence from another and different period. Martial's references date from the late first century A.D. and are therefore almost a century and a half later (Mart. 3.93.14–15; 11.47.1–2). One must doubt that prostitution had as yet become a conspicuous feature (if that is what it was in Martial's time) in the mid-first century B.C., when public bathing took place on a much more restricted scale than was the case later on.

A careful look at what, according to Cicero, was Clodia's part in the affair only shows her having questionable dealings with the *balneator*, but not otherwise entering the baths, nor meeting anyone else there. This does not seem to make a very good background for Appius Claudius' accusation.³² Furthermore, the speech of Appius Claudius appears in §34, while the episode in the Saenian baths is recounted much later, in §61. Perhaps one could have expected some cross-reference here, if the phrase *aqua inceste uterere* did indeed refer to the Saenian baths.

²⁹ "Unless possibly that lady of influence had bought the favour of the bathman by her usual farthing deal" (tr. Gardner 1958). For comments on the passage see Austin 1960: 124–125.

³⁰ This point is made by Skinner 1983: 276.

³¹ Skinner (1983: 276) seems to think along these lines, as inferred from her references to Martial.

³² Admittedly, the whole episode contains some mysterious aspects, especially in Cic. Cael. 69 with the reference to an *obsenissima fabula* that arose in this connection. Unsuccessful attempts at resolving the matter are registered by Austin 1960: 132 and 172, who confesses perplexity. In any case, "the practical joke played on Clodia" (132) can hardly have given rise to the notion that she was practicing prostitution in a public bathing establishment.

All in all, the interpretation that Cicero by *aqua inceste uterere* was referring to the commonly known possession of a water supply by some brothels in Rome, while at the same time implying that Clodia was a prostitute, would seem to make the best sense. This accusation by Cicero should of course not make us think that Clodia in reality was anything like a prostitute. It was simply a convenient and witty invective that referred to known malpractices in Rome.

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