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Preferred panel: The Powers of Persuasion

Title of paper: “*Dives effuse*: The Woman of Property in Cicero’s *pro Caelio*”

Length of paper: 20 minutes

Outline of content:

In the *pro Caelio* Cicero vilifies the key prosecution witness Clodia by assimilating her to a criminal heroine, a *Palatina Medea* (*Cael.* 18), and to the vengeful goddess Cybele (Salzman); by casting her as both a dissolute *meretrix* and a comic *imperatrix* (Geffcken 27–43; Ramage; Leen); by snide allusions to incest (*Cael.* 32, 36) and dire hints of poison (*Cael.* 59–60). While those defamatory tactics are widely recognized, scholars have not paid equal attention to recurrent attempts to use her wealth as a weapon against her. As the driving force behind Caelius’ prosecution, she is allegedly furnishing the resources (*opes*, 1, 19, 32) that allow the case to be brought. Use of money to exercise her will associates her with the stereotypical *dotata uxor* of Plautine comedy (Geffcken 28). That connection is reinforced by further allegations of profligacy and imperiousness and claims that she takes action without regard for male kin. In combination, such charges evoke the concerns about property in the hands of women articulated in a fragment of Cato the Censor’s speech supporting passage of the *Lex Voconia* (*ORF*⁴ fr. 158 *ap.* Gell. 17.6), in which a woman makes a personal loan to her husband, then has her own slave dun him for the amount. Clodia, who has supposedly loaned gold to a young man in order to bind him to her (*vis nobilis mulier illum filium familias patre parco ac tenaci habere tuis copiis devinctum*, *Cael.* 36), and who can allegedly induce other youths, *mulieris beatae ac nobilis*

familiaris (*Cael.* 67), to forego their dignity enough to undertake a humiliating commission from her, is merely a further extension of Cato's worst-case scenario.

Works Cited

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