

How clodius' history  
is used to blacken his  
character in the 'pro  
milone'



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Despite the fact that the Cicero constructs his argument based on factual evidence of what took place during the time before the fight and during the fracas itself, we cannot deny the fact that Cicero does at times use Clodius' past actions to aid his desired acquittal of Milo. Although not his predominant argument, this tactic of blackening his character by alluding to past events, a technique known as *paraleipsis*, definitely helps to soften the jury's attitudes towards a man who has already admitted to killing Clodius in self-defence, but arguably in doing so has removed "a festering wound" from Roman society as Cicero puts it. It must be noted that Cicero, as well as portraying Clodius in a bad light, helps extend this presentation as a malicious man by contrasting him with a seemingly virtuous Milo, which again appears to be an effective means of further bringing the character of Clodius into disrepute.

Cicero effectively inserts incidents of Clodius' past debauchery at moments where what he is speaking about in the trial resonates with these past actions. There is a moment where Cicero begins to speak about how there is always a chance of a robber being killed by the traveller rather than vice versa, and he ends his argument with an oblique reference to how "still a woman was falling upon men". This covert, lingering phrase alludes to Clodius' involvement with the Bona Dea scandal of 62BC in which he violated the sacred rights of the Vestal Virgins by attending one of their ceremonies dressed as a woman. There was a serious outrage in Rome at the time and the public demanded that he be punished by death for breaking such a religious sacrament, yet Clodius somehow managed to be acquitted by law; showing in itself his sly, manipulating nature, supported by when Cicero mentions the difference in Clodius' retinue on the day of the attack to what it

was usually: empty rather than burdened with strumpets and debauched women. This must still have been a tender issue for the Roman's at the time, with it only 10 years beforehand, and thus is a very effective means of blackening the character of Clodius, particularly leaving it at the end of the section, since any Roman disrespecting Roman tradition was viewed with disdain.

We know that Clodius used his tribuneship to great effect; raising the support from the lower classes, creating a clear distinction between the faction of the senate, and those of the plebs at such a turbulent political time. Cicero on countless occasions alludes to how his followers roamed the streets causing absolute turmoil, like how in one section he notes that they burned down the senate house after the death of Clodius to show how angry and enraged they were. Indeed, he also mentions about how Clodius' followers burned down the temple of the nymphs to extinguish the public records of the day and to cause general disruption. Although it is not strictly speaking directly linked to Clodius' actions, these men were influenced and roused into the state of fury they are now in, and thus this is an effective argument by Cicero on blackening Clodius' character since it shows the negative influence and lasting legacy he has on his followers.

It is mentioned in earlier sections that Clodius was the greatest driving force of criminals, and had always been the one to initiate aggressive meetings with Milo beforehand. Indeed, Cicero brings in the evidence that Marcus Favonius had said that Clodius was thirsty for Milo's blood and that he would be dead within 3 days. This surely is very effective evidence to prove that

Clodius had planned beforehand the assault on Milo because he was a hot-  
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headed, violent individual. We must not forget that at the time Milo was running for Consul and Clodius for Praetorship and thus there was elevated tension between the two, as Clodius feared that with Milo in a senior rank to him, he would be unable to instigate his reforms. Indeed, this leads on to the point that Cicero makes to the audience about if hypothetically Clodius was to become consul. He argues that the state would crumble and fall into disrepair and squalor because of his licentious, totalitarian actions such as threatening people like Scantia for their properties with death, and stealing people's children and wives, along with their money and their livelihood. This is very successful in blackening Clodius' character as it plays on our human fears and emotions of family and possession, and would definitely have moved the jury on a human level to sympathise with the victims of such horror. He rounds it off nicely by saying that only Pompey, the man who has made Rome so great, can continue such "long lasting hopes".

Clodius is described by Cicero as breaking property laws, and being ambitious in his desire to extend his property from the Janiculum to the Alps. He plays on the idea that he annexed the land of Marcus Paconius on the Prillian Lake without his permission and began to build a property on it, like how he built a wall that denied his sister access to her own forecourt and lodgings! This kind of behaviour which was not done through the "common artifice of law courts" was to be condemned and highlights the nature of Clodius as being devoid of empathy and morals.

Clodius' involvement with the Cataline conspiracy is also alluded to by Cicero overtly, when he comments on how prior to the lawsuit they are now having, some citizens had begun to question whether Clodius would have, on behalf <https://assignbuster.com/how-clodius-history-is-used-to-blacken-his-character-in-the-pro-milone/>

of Cataline, " seized some stronghold and broken out". This is particularly effective evidence in blackening the character of Clodius, as the Catalinian conspiracy was effectively against Cicero and the state and so much of the Roman people were in support of how Cicero quelled the uprising. Furthermore, Cicero comments how Clodius was responsible for exiling " a man whom the Roman people had deemed to be the saviour of the city" (Cicero himself) and thus this portrays Clodius as a villain, attempting to remove a man who has settled the anxieties of the nation. It is effective as it guides nationalistic feelings to see Clodius in a bad light.

When dealing with the nature of the questioning of slaves, Cicero comments how he believed that the interrogation of a slave was only permitted with a crime against the gods, and then adds on, or when there was an inquest into incest. It was common knowledge that Clodius had had incest with his full sister Clodia and thus this is effective in blacking the character of Clodius, as it brings fresh to the jury's memory this crime against the gods, much like the Bona Deas scandle does.

Finally, Cicero aids the blackening of Clodius' character by expressing the juxtaposition of Milo's virtuous, selfless nature with it. He describes Milo as a man who has always had the best intentions for the state, who told Pompey of a plot against him whilst revealing his innocence from claims of his desire to overthrow Pompey, who Cicero would weep for due to the fact they are even now considering to exile him even though he has been so dutiful to the state. He says how kind Milo was to his slaves and how he was travelling with choristers and innocent maidens on the day of the attack. All of these

contrast his positive intentions and virtues, with the deceit and criminality of Clodius, thus extending his black character.

Overall, we have to agree with the statement that Cicero does successfully deploy his references to blacken Clodius' character as it is not his primary argument, but merely one to help persuade the judges to exonerate Milo. It is effectively contrasted with the positive character of Milo. Thus, by the end, we feel a clear distinction between the terror of Clodius who fell upon a hero to the state, and as a result we are disposed to perhaps acquit Milo.