Reader Response Essay: in Defense of Marcus Caelius

**Summary:**

The chief prosecutor Atratinus, a seventeen-year-old man, had double incentive for instituting the proceedings: Caelius had accused his father and had preceded himself in the affections of Clodia, also known as The Medea of the Palatine. Cicero undertook the defense to avenge himself on Clodia and her brother, Publius Clodius, who was the reason he was exiled. Catullus lost Clodia to Caelius in “*Lesbia*”. Caelius was acquitted, and Clodia appears to have gone into complete social and moral eclipse as Catullus 58 suggests: “*O Caelius, our Lesbia, that Lesbia, That Lesbia, she whom Catullus only, Loved, more than his own soul or any other, Now at the crossroads, in the narrow alleys, Preys on the random sons of Father Remus.”* Caelius met no better fate. At the outbreak of the civil war he joined Caesar but grew dissatisfied with his share of the spoils. In an organized revolt, he was killed.

**Reaction:**

The speech by Cicero is one of the most outstanding speeches for its malicious wit, and its classic apology of wildoat-sowing, and the historical interest of the characters involved.

In the lines from “But you can see… …reason, inference with inference”, we can see that Cicero only talks about how he wants the judges to rely on their own greatness, the greatness of their judgement and the honor and the court that they uphold. This only shows how he is playing with the minds of the judges and not really showing any proof or real evidence. This also goes and contradicts what he says towards the end of the paragraph stating that he will present only “points, reason and inference”.

In Paragraph 14, where he lists all the crimes that he is accusing her of, He decides to not list them as points one after the other. He proceeds to ask them as questions and answers them as answers. This puts into perspective as to how plays with the people’s minds. By posing the crime as a question he lets the person imagine what could have been done and then answers it, adding more story and feeling that she is guilty in the minds of the judges and public.

**Questions:**

Throughout the speech we see that Cicero was accusing various crimes and offences and he outright points them out. **"You adulterer! You libertine! You bribery-agent!" This is the language of abuse, not of legal prosecution. But then he also goes and plays the mind games of asking questions and answering them themselves and of buttering up the judges. Does this mean that he is a good lawyer/arguer or that he has no context and is going all over the place.**

**Could he not have condensed the speech? Was the motif for a long speech to deter everyone from his ideas or was it to prove his point or was he taking advantage that he had the stage?**