

CELER AND NEPOS

Asconius 63 (Clark), commenting on the *pro Cornelio*: Fuerunt enim tunc plures Quinti Metelli, ex quibus duo consulares, Pius et Creticus, de quibus apparet eum non dicere, duo autem adulescentes, Nepos et Celer, ex quibus nunc Nepotem significat. Eius enim patrem Q. Metellum Nepotem, Baliarici filium, Macedonici nepotem qui consul fuit cum T. Didio, Curio is de quo loquitur accusavit . . .

CICERO and his scholiast¹ refer to 'duo Metelli, Celer et Nepos', but like Asconius do not specify their relationship. Celer himself, followed by Cicero in correspondence with him, calls Nepos his *frater*,² but since both bore the *praenomen* Q., this cannot be the whole story. Celer's career shows that he was the elder, yet Nepos *senior*, according to Asconius, entrusted his feud with Curio not to him but to Nepos *iunior*.

There was an elder Q. Metellus Celer, probably tribune of the *plebs* in 90, who earned the nickname by his speed in celebrating funerary games for his father,³ and who was 'non ille quidem orator sed tamen non infans'.⁴ It would be satisfying to make him the father of our Celer, and the elder Nepos father of our Nepos, with *frater* meaning, as often, *frater patruelis*; but since both men were Q.f.,⁵ we should simply be faced with the same difficulty—two brothers called Q.—in the previous generation.

The solution of Drumann⁶ was to make both men the sons of Nepos *senior*, the elder being adopted by Celer *senior* and taking his name. But the elder Nepos was the senior Metellus of his generation—son of Macedonicus' eldest son—while the elder Celer, to judge by his *praenomen*, was evidently a second son of a second or third son (L. Diadematus or his brother M.). The hypothesis implies not only that Nepos *senior* gave away his first-born to one of his younger cousins, but that he did so before his second son was born (or at least named), for otherwise the younger Nepos would hardly have been called Quintus. To avoid this improbable idea, Drumann postulated an unknown eldest son of Nepos *senior*, called Q. after his father; the younger Celer would then be the second son, given in adoption to Celer *senior*; the first son then died, and when the third was born he was called Q. Nepos as being in effect his father's eldest (and now only) son. Münzer accepted this theory in Pauly-Wissowa, and Degraasi and Broughton have followed him, adding to the filiation of both Celer and Nepos a 'Q.n.' for which there is no ancient evidence. But it is uneconomical, unattractive, and unnecessary.

It is much simpler to suppose that Q. Celer *senior* had two sons, of whom the elder (our Q. Celer) was named after himself, and that he gave the younger in adoption to Q. Nepos *senior*—a perfectly comprehensible action if the latter had no son of his own, to keep the senior line of the family in being. The elder Nepos' deathbed instruction to prosecute Curio (recorded in Asconius) would then be given to his son by adoption. Not that it made any difference: the

¹ Cic. *Brut.* 247, ps.-Asc. 187 and 259 Stangl.

² Cic. *Fam.* 5. 1. 1, 2. 6–10.

³ Plut. *Rom.* 10. 2, *Cor.* 11. 3.

⁴ Cic. *Brut.* 305.

⁵ Indices to Dio, xxxvii and xxxix; cf. headings to Cic. *Fam.* 5. 1–2.

⁶ *Gesch. Roms*² ii. 20–1.

younger Nepos was now *Q.f.Q.n.*, grandson of Baliaricus and great-grandson of Macedonicus, while his elder brother Celer remained *Q.f.* and either *L.n.* or *M.n.*, depending on which of Macedonicus' sons was their father's father.

This more straightforward reconstruction is impossible if, as Drumann believed (followed in this too by Münzer), the elder Nepos' sister was married to Ap. Claudius Pulcher, *cos.* 79. For his sons Ap. Claudius and P. Clodius were *fratres* not only of Nepos¹ but also of Celer,² implying that both the latter were sons of the elder Nepos.

The elder Nepos certainly had a sister,³ but there is nothing to suggest that she was married to Appius; indeed, the failure of Cicero to mention him and his family at *Rosc. Am.* 15 and 147 counts against the idea. There were, after all, other Caeciliae in that generation, the 'multae neptes' who saw Macedonicus to his pyre,⁴ and who may have included—unless they were Calvus' granddaughters—the two sisters mentioned by Cicero in the anecdote at *div.* 1. 104. Drumann's choice of the elder Nepos' sister is simply a *petitio principii*: he appeals to the very theory about the parentage of the younger Celer and Nepos which itself depends on the identification of Appius' wife.

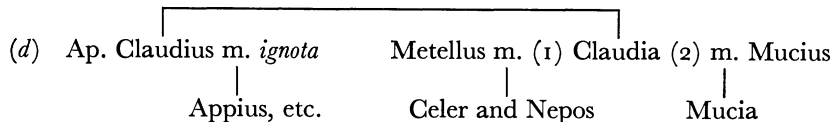
Celer and Nepos were *fratres* of P. Clodius and the younger Appius, and also of Mucia, Pompey's third wife.⁵ The word can mean brother by birth or adoption, half-brother, or first cousin: how may the relationships of the Metelli, the Claudii, and Mucia be explained to account for our evidence? Five solutions are possible:

(a) They were all cousins; the father of Celer and Nepos would then be the brother of two Caeciliae who married Ap. Claudius and a Mucius Scaevola. The difficulty here is that though *soror* can mean a first cousin (as at *Cic. Phil.* 2. 99), the usage is rare, and less likely than '(half-)sister' in the context of *Fam.* 5. 2. 6.

(b) They all had the same mother, married in turn to a Metellus, a Claudius, and a Mucius. But three marriages may be going too far, especially as Ap. Claudius had at least six children; in any case, there is no hint that Mucia was the sister of the younger Appius, Clodius, and the Clodiae.

(c) The Metelli and the Claudii had the same mother, and Mucia was a cousin of the Metelli. But this is liable to the same objection as (a).

All the foregoing difficulties would be avoided if the Metelli and Mucia had the same mother and the Claudii were cousins of the Metelli. Two reconstructions, (d) and (e), would produce this result:



However, three sisters of the elder Appius (though evidently by an earlier marriage of his father) are accounted for already—Ti. Gracchus' wife, the

¹ *Cic. Att.* 4. 3. 4, *dom.* 7 and 87, *Fam.* 5. 3. 1.

² *Cic. Cael.* 60, *har. resp.* 45, cf. *Dio* 37. 51. 2 *ἐν γένει ἀδελφῶν*.

³ *Cic. div.* 1. 4 and 99, *Rosc. Am.* 147, cf. 27.

⁴ *Cic. T.D.* 1. 85.

⁵ *Cic. Fam.* 5. 2. 6, 'vestra sorore'; *Dio* 37. 49. 3 for Celer. Cf. *Val. Max.* 7. 8. 3 ('artissimum sanguinis vinculum').

