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Catullus, Serapis, and Harpocrates

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Abstract

This essay examines three Catullan references to Isiac divinities in the light of controversies over the restoration of Ptolemy XII Auletes to the Egyptian throne and popular struggles to establish sanctuaries of those deities on the Capitoline. It argues for connections between a mention of an eight-bearer litter in c. 10 and the lectica octaphoros *belonging to the king, and between an allusion to a shrine of Serapis in the same poem and current religious disturbances. In c. 74, an obscene joke about the child god Harpocrates is linked to conspiracy allegations at the trial of M. Caelius Rufus, but a comparable mention of that deity in c. 102 remains obscure. Catullus' presentation of his translation of Callimachus' "Lock of Berenice" as a gift to Q. Hortensius Hortalus might also be tangentially related to the Egyptian Question; certainly the project could have supplied him with a deeper background in Ptolemaic cosmological and religious ideology. Discussion of these references assumes that topical events would be at the forefront of Roman readers' minds. The essay concludes, however, with speculations on whether the poet's Bithynian sojourn might have exposed him to alternative perspectives on Isiac cults.*

Sometime, perhaps, in his mid-twenties, the poet C. Valerius Catullus, born probably in 84 BCE, came to Rome from Verona. While we have no evidence for the year of his arrival, his securely datable poems were all written during the period 56–54 BCE,[1] a time when Romans were preoccupied with both internal Egyptian politics[2] and attempts by adherents of Isiac religion to establish a shrine within the city.[3] In his collection Catullus explicitly mentions divinities associated with Isis three times, in cc. 10.26, 74.4 and 102.4. In this essay I will examine the poet's allusions to Isis worship in the context of senatorial debates regarding Egypt and elite concerns about the infiltration of exotic rites. My contribution is offered to David Soren in thanks for his warm collegiality and generosity in sharing his expert knowledge of ancient archaeological sites and material evidence. I have learned a great deal from him, and my teaching and research are much the better for it.

It is impossible in a brief essay to trace all the muddled ins and outs of the so-called "Egyptian Question," which originated when the ruler of Egypt Ptolemy Alexander bequeathed his kingdom to the Romans[4] and came to a head after his successor Ptolemy XII Neos Dionysos, known as Auletes, was recognized as *socius et amicus populi Romani* in 59 BCE but driven from the throne by an Alexandrian mob in the following summer. The immediate cause of his deposition was the Roman annexation of Egypt's former possession Cyprus, which Auletes did nothing to prevent despite the fact that its unfortunate king, Ptolemy of Cyprus, was his own brother.[5] In autumn 58 the ex-monarch ventured to Rome seeking the assistance of leading senators, chiefly Pompey, in obtaining his restoration. He expected such help because he was heavily indebted to Roman financiers for part of the 6,000 talents he had already disbursed to Caesar and Pompey to secure his coveted status as ally.[6] During the year of his residence in Rome, living as a guest at Pompey's Alban villa, he continued his massive program of strategic bribery while borrowing funds from prominent optimates at extravagant rates of interest. His creditors were convinced that putting him back on the throne, by an armed expedition if necessary, was the only option if they wished to see their loans repaid. Though Ptolemy himself desired Pompey to undertake the mission and lobbied for him through his agents, conservative senators balked at giving the triumvir another sole command, and a fierce dispute arose over the plum assignment. Together with other prominent politicians, Rome's two leading orators Cicero and his longtime rival Q. Hortensius Hortalus championed the candidacy of P. Lentulus Spinther, consul in 57 BCE, who eventually received from the Senate a mandate to restore the king. Spinther was then prevented from taking action by the ultra-conservative Cato, who opportunely discovered a Sibylline oracle prohibiting any Egyptian military expedition.

While senators were still debating the nomination, however, the Alexandrians had sent a large embassy to Rome declaring their opposition to the restoration of the king by force. Before arriving in the city, these ambassadors were ambushed and many killed, and, although their leader Dio escaped, he himself was murdered before he could give an account of events to the Senate. Auletes, according to Cicero,[7] not only did not deny his responsibility but openly admitted it, though he subsequently thought it prudent to withdraw from Rome and take refuge at the temple of Artemis in Ephesus. Finally, in 55 BCE, Aulus Gabinius, proconsul of Syria and an associate of Pompey, illegally left his province, marched his army down to Egypt, and put Auletes back on his throne. After his return, Gabinius was subjected to a series of trials and eventually condemned on extortion charges, including receiving a substantial bribe from the once and future king.[8] The Egyptian Question was thus settled for the moment, although Rome's involvement with the country and its royal dynasty was by no means over.

As a member of the governor C. Memmius' cohort, Catullus himself was absent in Bithynia from late 57 through spring 56, when the Dio affair and its immediate fallout occurred.[9] However, if the Caelius and/or the Rufus named in some of his poems (Caelius in cc. 58 and 100; Rufus in cc. 69 and 77) is M. Caelius Rufus, prosecuted in April 56 under a *lex de vi* and successfully defended by Cicero, the poet upon his return might have taken a personal interest in the matter. Two of the charges brought against Caelius involved an attack upon the Alexandrian delegation at Puteoli and an alleged attempt on Dio's life, and on the latter count Clodia Metelli, Caelius' purported ex-mistress and Catullus' probable beloved "Lesbia," was the star witness.[10] Several of the poet's epigrams, as we will see, seem to refer to those facts. Whatever his later connection with the judicial proceedings, Catullus' poetry makes it clear that Ptolemy Auletes and the controversies surrounding him were still fresh in the public mind.

Meantime, and not perhaps incidentally, Isiac votaries were clashing with the Senate over the establishment of a sanctuary in the capital.[11] Although archaeological, epigraphic and numismatic evidence may point to an *Iseum* on the Capitoline as early as 100 BCE,[12] and the existence of a priestly college is attested for the time of Sulla,[13] state action was certainly taken against the cult for political rather than moral reasons in 58, 53, and 48 BCE. There is, moreover, an anecdote in Valerius Maximus stating that the consul L. Aemilius Paulus personally enforced a Senatorial decree commanding the destruction of shrines (*fana*) of Isis and Serapis:[14] when workers hesitated to carry out the order, Paulus laid aside his magistrate's toga, took up an axe and beat the doors in.[15] While it is probable that the incident took place in Rome, the date is unclear; earlier scholarship assigned it to 50 BCE, but there are good reasons for moving it back to 182 and aligning it with the pronouncement against Bacchic cults four years earlier.[16] If so, it would establish an equally long pattern of senatorial hostility to Isis worship as well as Bacchic rites, and probably for much the same reason: large unsupervised popular gatherings posed a danger to civic stability.

Before the beginning of 58 BCE, as we learn from a passage of Varro quoted by Tertullian,[17] altars dedicated to Isis as well as to several Isiac deities—Serapis, Harpocrates and Anubis—had been erected on the Capitoline, destroyed by the Senate, and then rebuilt by the populace. When Gabinius, consul for 58, was about to inspect the sacrifices on the Kalends of January as the initial act of his new magistracy, the crowd prevented him from doing so because he had not pronounced (*constituisset*) upon the Egyptian gods. Upholding the decree of the senate, he banned their reestablishment.[18] Dio records another senatorial decree in late 53 closing privately built shrines of Isis and Serapis, which he considers an ominous portent of civil disturbances soon to occur in 52.[19] He also states that in 48 bees, presumably foretelling the invasion of foreign divinities, that settled near a Capitoline statue of Hercules while rites of Isis were going on led soothsayers to recommend razing the temple precincts of the Egyptian gods. When a temple of Bellona was accidentally damaged during that process, jars filled with human flesh were reportedly found.[20] These attested clashes were likely not the only incidents.

Though the sources for the socio-religious dispute are admittedly late, enough evidence survives to indicate that tensions between the government and the followers of Isis were running high during the fifties. In conjunction with the passions triggered by the ongoing Egyptian Question, this controversy suggests that any allusion to Isiac cult, even a casual one, in writings of the period might well have underlying topical significance. It is worth exploring Catullus' three overt mentions of Egyptian gods to see whether that assumption holds true.

We can begin with a reference occurring in the anecdotal c. 10. This piece is set in 56 BCE shortly after Catullus had returned to Rome from Bithynia. He has just met his friend Varus' girlfriend, patronizingly evaluated in an aside to readers as a *scortillum.../ non sane illepidum neque invenustum* ("a little whore... but certainly not uncharming nor unpretty," 3–4). When conversation turns to how he had made out financially while on Memmius' staff, Catullus complains coarsely of the poverty of Bithynia and his superior officer's stinginess. His companions press him harder: surely, though, he managed to obtain what is reported to be (*dicitur esse*, 15) the local product—litter bearers? To impress the girl, and despite the fact that (as he frankly tells us) he had no slave able to lift the foot of an old cot, Catullus modestly confesses to having acquired "eight tall fellows" (*octo homines...rectos*, 20). At which point his new acquaintance cuts in:

> *'quaeso', inquit, 'mihi, mi Catulle, paulum*
> *istos commoda: nam volo ad Serapim*
> *deferri'*
>
> "Please," she said, "Catullus dear, lend me those boys for a while,
> for I want to be carried to Serapis' shrine." (25–27)

An awkward retraction follows. Actually he misspoke: his friend Cinna—you know, Gaius—had *bought* them but he can use them whenever he likes as if he owned them. As for *you* (rounding on the girl) you're downright obtuse and obnoxious (*insulsa male et molesta*, 33), since you won't let someone speak loosely (*negligentem*, 34).

Scholarly interest in the poem centers on the manipulation of the first-person character Catullus and the partisan implications of his remarks about Memmius,[21] but intertextual echoes triggered by the verb *dicitur*, which points to statements about litters in previous texts, have likewise been noted. Employment of a litter by an able-bodied man is a polemic motif in oratory, cited as evidence of both effeminacy and arrogance.[22] In a fragment of a speech by C. Gracchus, a legate being transported back to Rome in a litter purchased abroad is castigated for cruelty to an Italian herdsman who mocked his mode of transport.[23] Cicero's abuse of Verres for conducting an administrative tour in Sicily via an eight-man litter *ut mos fuit Bithyniae regibus* ("in the style of Bithynian kings") expressly compares the corrupt procurator to Rome's current antagonist Mithridates of Pontus.[24] Both literary recollections seem perfectly suited to their present context, insofar as they comment ironically upon the speaker's own pretentiousness and his greedy preoccupation with making a fortune abroad.

These intertextual allusions, however, are overshadowed by a topical association corresponding in all particulars to the fictive circumstances surrounding the litter of c. 10. During his stay in Rome, Ptolemy Auletes was borne through the streets in a *lectica octaphoros* accompanied by a royal bodyguard. When the king himself was not using it, the conveyance, together with the bodyguard, was at the disposal of his associate P. Asicius. Some time before Caelius' trial, Asicius was prosecuted for the actual murder of Dio; on that occasion, too, Cicero procured an acquittal.[25] In a letter to his brother Quintus probably written later that spring, the orator recalls a time when he apparently borrowed the whole equipage:[26]

> *memini enim, cum hominem [M. Marium] portarem ad Baias Neapoli octaphoro Asiciano machaerophoris centum sequentibus, miros risus nos edere, cum ille ignarus sui comitatus repente aperuit lecticam et paene ille timore, ego risu corrui.*
>
> For I remember, when I was giving Marius a ride from Naples to Baiae in Asicius' eight-man litter with a hundred armed men following, I had a great laugh when he, unaware of his escort, suddenly opened the litter. He almost collapsed from fright, I from laughter.

Marius was an elderly invalid about whose health Cicero greatly worried, so employment of an ordinary litter under those conditions would have been perfectly justified. What the king's litter was doing in Naples, however, when he himself was presumably still in Rome; why the bodyguard was with the litter and not the king; and how Cicero got access to such amenities are all matters left unexplained, seemingly because Quintus already knew them. It is curious, though, that in a historical setting where a highly recognizable, indeed unique, eight-man litter really could be loaned out to third parties, the girl expresses a wish to borrow Catullus' vehicle because she desires to visit a shrine of Serapis—perhaps the disputed locale on the Capitoline. Sarcasm on her part is not unlikely, for, given those frequent civic disturbances noted above, the prudence of such an action might be questionable. Concluding that the royal litter and the turmoil involving Isiac places of worship are meaningfully linked, and that readers are expected to approach the story in that light, seems inescapable. While Catullus may have been abroad during most of Ptolemy's stay in Rome, he lost no time, it seems, in catching up with events upon his return, and the subtext of his narrative suggests lingering hostility to the king and his agents.

Two additional references to Isiac cult are epigrammatic mentions of the divine child Harpocrates (Egyptian *Ḥr-p³-ḫrd*, "Horus the Child"). In connection with Ptolemy, the aptness of the first invites conjecture. It occurs in one of seven invectives in the elegiac collection attacking a Gellius usually identified with L. Gellius Poplicola, son or, more likely, grandson of the consul of 72 BCE.[27] Incest is a running motif throughout this cycle, and c. 74 is the opening salvo:

> *Gellius audierat patruum obiurgare solere*
> *si quis delicias diceret aut faceret.*
> *hoc ne ipsi accideret, patrui perdepsuit ipsam*
> *uxorem, et patruum reddidit Arpocratem.*
> *quod voluit fecit: nam, quamvis irrumet ipsum*
> *nunc patruum, verbum non faciet patruus.*
>
> Gellius had heard his paternal uncle was primed to censure anyone who spoke or did naughty things. So that this would not happen to him, he kneaded Uncle's own wife and turned Uncle into Harpocrates. He got what he wanted, for however much he now screws Uncle himself, Uncle will not say a word.

As scholars have noted, Harpocrates' portrayal in Hellenistic art sets up the rather sophomoric double entendre.[28] Greek representations of the god show him with his finger placed just beneath his lips (Fig. 1), a gesture misinterpreted by Roman viewers as a call to mystic silence.[29] The innocent sense of the Harpocrates reference, then, is that by seducing his aunt Gellius has shamed his uncle into uttering no further reproof. *Irrumet* (5) must be construed metaphorically as "treat with contempt." Native Egyptian iconography, however, makes the child god actually suck his finger in token of his



Figure 1: Figure of Harpocrates: The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.

youth.[30] It is that indigenous meaning, Kitchell contends, that Catullus draws on, as an "esoteric piece of Eastern lore" (109), to stress, with *irrumet* understood on its obscene level, that Gellius has also silenced his uncle by oral rape. Perhaps, though, this earlier meaning would not have been so esoteric; because of the ongoing turmoil over the cult and its deities, Roman observers might well have known what the detail originally represented. Apart from its felicitous openness to risqué interpretation, the figure of Harpocrates is particularly appropriate in a squib denouncing Gellius for incest, since the child god was the son of Isis and her husband-brother Osiris.

Furthermore, c. 74 is linked through a series of cross-references to surrounding poems already shown to designate persons connected with the trial of M. Caelius Rufus. An earlier epigram, c. 69, attacks a Rufus for body odor: a fierce goat is said to dwell under his arms, a *mala bestia* ("evil beast") with whom no pretty girl would lie. In c. 71 an *aemulus* ("rival") is afflicted with both armpit odor and gout (*podagra*). Each poem, it has been suggested, puns on a personal name. The *bestia* of the first recalls L. Calpurnius Bestia, the biological father of Caelius' prosecutor Sempronius Atratinus, whom Caelius had previously accused of bribery.[31] Lameness (*claudicatio*) is characteristically associated with gout, and other instances of paronomasia involving the lexeme *claud-* point to a likely pun on Clodia's *gentilicium*.[32] Finally, c. 74 harks forward to c. 77, once again targeting a Rufus, which offers clues to its historical context in its opening fiscal language troping friendship as a loan and its closing metaphors of poison. Both systems of imagery refer to accusations brought against Caelius Rufus in the trial of 56 BCE, first of all borrowing money to finance the murder of the ambassador Dio and then attempting to poison Clodia.[33] Indeed, the entire sequence of epigrams from c. 69 to c. 79, in which Lesbia's identity is finally unmasked, can be read as an interconnected web wherein motif repetition and verbal parallels attach the themes of her own infidelity, betrayal of friendship by other *amici*, and familial incest to personalities and charges involved in that trial.[34]

While the Harpocrates reference in c. 74 gains point from its indirect association with the Egyptian Question, the second occurrence of the divine name is harder to explain. [35] In c. 102, Catullus pledges his silence to an otherwise unspecified Cornelius:

> *Si quicquam tacito commissum est fido ab amico,*
> *cuius sit penitus nota fides animi,*
> *meque esse invenies illorum iure sacratum,*
> *Corneli, et factum me esse puta Arpocratem.*
>
> If anything has been entrusted by a loyal friend to a man of silence whose fidelity of mind is deeply known, you will find me bound up by oath with the code of those men, Cornelius, and consider me made a Harpocrates.[36]

Edwards remarks that circulation of the epigram, whether in a published collection or independently, calls attention to a secret by betraying its existence. The presence of a confidence known but to a select few, and the privilege conferred by that knowledge, may indeed be its point. In the opening distich the notion of mutual fidelity (*fido ab amico…fides*) and the religious overtones of *iure sacratum* evoke the solemnity of initiatory rites. A striking lexical parallel occurs in Apuleius' novel when Photis begs Lucius

to keep secret the *arcana* she is about to reveal:[37]

> *sed melius de te doctrinaque tua praesumo, qui praeter generosam natalium dignitatem praeter sublime ingenium sacris pluribus initiatus profecto nosti sanctam silentii fidem.*
>
> But I have better faith in you and your training, you who apart from the great nobility of your parentage and your towering intellect surely know, having been initiated in many cults, the holy responsibility of silence.

Photis' testimonial of course foreshadows Lucius' eventual complicated and elaborate initiations into the mysteries of Isis. By adopting the pose of an initiate who verges on the brink of betraying the cult secret but does not, Catullus could be ironically recalling the fanatic tenacity of those real-life devotees of Isis who struggled with the Senate over the acceptability of their observances.[38]

One recent interpretive suggestion may bear on all these Serapic references. In c. 65 Catullus apologizes to Q. Hortensius Hortalus for his inability to compose an original poem due to grief over his brother's death. As a substitute, he sends the accompanying c. 66, a translation of Callimachus' *Lock of Berenice*. The rationale for this particular gift, Du Quesnay proposes, may have been Hortensius' prominent involvement in the dispute over the Egyptian Question. While it is perhaps going too far to regard it as a commissioned piece manifesting Hortensius' esteem for the Ptolemaic dynasty, the choice of work to translate may indeed be influenced by the recipient's known investment in settling the king's affairs.[39] In the course of rendering Callimachus' masterpiece into Latin, could Catullus have gained additional understanding of Ptolemaic religious ideology? Current scholarship on Alexandrian poetry has shown how deeply it integrates Egyptian cosmological and religious motifs with Greek myth.[40] In his compositions for the royal court, Callimachus Hellenized notions of divine kingship intrinsic to the ruler's performance of his functions as Pharaoh.[41] This is singularly true of the *Lock of Berenice*, which, through the catasterism of the Lock, suggests that Berenice, nominal "daughter" of the recently deified Arsinoë II, must herself be divine.[42] As the consort of the reigning monarch, Berenice, like Arsinoë, was venerated by her Egyptian subjects as an avatar of Isis. Although hair-sacrifice was an element of Greek funerary ritual familiar from Homer,[43] her dedication of a tress in thanksgiving for a husband's safe return assimilates her even more closely to the mourning Isis, who cut her hair upon learning of Osiris' death and dismemberment.[44] Awareness of the Egyptian royal foundation myth is therefore essential to grasp the message Callimachus had attempted to convey.

Since scholia on the *Aetia* were circulating within a generation of the author's death, it is conceivable that Catullus had much of that background information at his disposal.[45] If he was working upon the *Lock of Berenice* before his trip to Bithynia, as seems likely from the chronology, his knowledge of the sacral lore surrounding Isis might inform his casual references to Egyptian deities. In c. 10, the girl's desire to visit a shrine of Serapis would be a pointed allusion to the divine benefactor of the Ptolemaic house. If c. 74 is linked with the prosecution of Caelius for complicity in Dio's death, the Harpocrates witticism becomes more acerbic once we remember that the reigning pharaoh was identified with the divine child Horus, avenger of his murdered father. Lastly—though, admittedly, this is a bit of a stretch—when Catullus in c. 102 invites Cornelius to think of him "made Harpocrates," we might suspect a metapoetic joke, because, as we will see below, the youthful Egyptian god was also syncretized with Apollo, Callimachus' literary patron.[46]

In examining Catullus' three cultic allusions and his translation of the *Lock of Berenice*, this essay has focused upon their Roman political resonances, which would probably be of most interest to the metropolitan elites who comprised the poet's immediate readership. Yet we should recall that the influx of Egyptian religion into the capital city was part of a wider trans-Mediterranean diffusion that permeated into remoter areas of the Hellenized east, including Catullus' own province of Pontus and Bithynia.[47] Exposure to forms of worship where he was stationed or at ports of call visited on his return journey may have given him a less politicized view of these rites.[48] At Cius in Bithynia, not far from the provincial capital of Nicaea, for example, two inscriptions assigned to the first century BCE indicate that Egyptian cults were well established there.[49] In one (no. 324 Vidman), members of a *thiasos* honor a certain Anubion, holder of the liturgical office of trierarch, for properly exercising his religious functions, including those connected with the Charmosyna festival of Isis; the other (no. 325 Vidman), is a hymn of praise to various divinities—Anubis, Osiris, Zeus Kronides, Ammon, Serapis and finally Isis herself, who is accorded an exceptional genealogy as daughter of Ouranos and nursling of Erebos. Under early Ptolemaic influence, furthermore, Hellenistic cult institutions are documented for many of the *claras Asiae…urbes* ("famous cities of Asia," c. 46.6) Catullus looks forward to visiting on his way home.[50] Finally, it seems pertinent to cite as an evocative parallel one case of probable Isiac impact upon a Roman officer posted abroad. A Greek inscription found in Naples (no. 496 Vidman = *Inscriptiones Graecae* XIV.719) and belonging to the early first century CE records the dedication to Isis of a statue of Apollo-Horus-Harpocrates, one god under three names, made by the praetor M. Opsius Naevius, who lists in his *cursus honorum* the quaestorship of Pontus and Bithynia.[51] Scholars have long postulated that acquaintance with the worship of Anatolian Cybele in her homeland may underlie the singular and disturbing portrayal of Attis in c. 63; perhaps that was not the only exotic religion with which Catullus came into contact.

Previous generations of readers assumed the poet was indifferent to the political events of his time and regarded his attacks on figures like Caesar as motivated only by personal animosity, perhaps over rivalry for Lesbia. During the past three decades, however, many critics have expressed the opinion that, concerned about the state of affairs in Rome, he does indeed take serious stances on public issues.[52] This essay has attempted to build on that emerging picture of Catullus as politically aware observer by showing that, even though he does not express his own views, references to Isiac divinities contain topical implications marking him as an engaged witness to disputes over Egyptian matters. It is arguable that his familiarity with Callimachus' court poetry, along with possible encounters with Isiac practices during his overseas assignment, may have allowed him to form opinions more lenient and less politically charged than those of the senatorial class who were making Egyptian issues a bone of internal contention.[53]

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1 T. P. Wiseman, "Catullus, His Life and Times," *Journal of Roman Studies* 69 (1979), 167.

2 On events surrounding Ptolemy Auletes' ousting and restoration, see: Israel Shatzman, "The Egyptian Question in Roman Politics (59-54 B.C.)," *Latomus* 30.2 (1971): 363–369; Dorothy J. Thompson, "Egypt, 146–31 B.C.," in J. A. Crook, Andrew Lintott, and Elizabeth Rawson (eds.), *Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 310–326, accessed January 23, 2016, http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521256032.011; Erich S. Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1995 [1974]), 306–308; Mary Siani-Davies, "Ptolemy XII Auletes and the Romans," in *Marcus Tullius Cicero:* Pro Rabirio Postumo (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 1–38; Richard Westall, "The Loan to Ptolemy XII, 59–48 BCE," *Ricerche di egittologia e di antichicà copte* 12 (2010): 23–41.

3 For evidence concerning senatorial opposition to Isiac cult at this period, see Reinhold Merkelbach, *Isis regina—Zeus Sarapis: Die griechisch-ägyptische Religion nach den Quellen dargestellt* (B. G. Teubner: Stuttgart und Leipzig, 1995), 131–132; Sarolta A. Takács, *Isis and Sarapis in the Roman World* (Leiden, New York and Köln: Brill, 1995), 56–70; Miguel John Versluys, "'Isis Capitolina' and the Egyptian Cults in Late Republican Rome," in Laurent Bricault (ed.), *Isis en Occident* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 421–448; and Kaj Sandberg, "Isis Capitolina and the *Pomerium*: Notes on the Augural Topography of the Capitolium," *Arctos* 43 (2009): 141–160.

4 Cicero, *De lege agraria* ("On the Agrarian Law") 2.41. Whether the testator was Ptolemy IX Alexander I, killed in 87 BCE, or his successor Ptolemy X Alexander II, who was murdered by a mob in 80/79 BCE after a 19-day reign, remains unclear. Ernst Badian, "The Testament of Ptolemy Alexander," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 110 (1967): 178–192, champions the former; David C. Braund, "Royal Wills and Rome," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 51 (1983), 24–28, argues for the latter.

5 In February 58 BCE, through tribunician legislation promulgated by P. Clodius Pulcher, the younger Cato was commissioned to supervise the annexation of the island, remove its king, confiscate his property, and oversee its sale at auction with the proceeds going to the treasury, most likely to finance Clodius' newly enacted *lex frumentaria* (W. Jeffrey Tatum, *The Patrician Tribune: Publius Clodius Pulcher* [Chapel Hill and London: UNC Press, 1999], 121–122, 150–151, 155–156). Though Ptolemy of Cyprus was offered honorable retirement as a priest of Aphrodite at Paphos, he chose to commit suicide (Plutarch, *Cato minor* ["Life of the Younger Cato"] 35–36). Auletes' forbearance, meanwhile, may have been part of the price paid for Roman recognition (Siani-Davies 2001, 17).

6 Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* ("Life of the Deified Julius") 54; Dio Cassius 39.12.1.

7 *Pro Caelio* ("In Defense of Caelius") 23.

8 On the indictments brought against Gabinius and their outcomes, see Gruen 1995, 322–328 and Elaine Fantham, "The Trials of Gabinius in 54 B.C.," *Historia* 24.3 (1975): 425–443.

9 Although we have only Catullus' word that he served on the governor's staff, to doubt his testimony seems overly skeptical. Memmius, expressly designated *praetor* at 10.13 and 28.8, held that office in 58 BCE (Cicero, *Epistulae ad Quintum Fratrem* ["Letters to His Brother Quintus"] 1.2.16) and is celebrated as *imperator* on the reverse of a *denarius* (no. 427.1, minted by his nephew at Rome in 56), alluding to victories in Bithynia and Pontus (M. H. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage*, 2 vols. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975], I.451). The numismatic evidence implies Catullus might even have seen combat.

10 For the function of these charges in the indictment and Clodia's involvement in the case, see Marilyn B. Skinner, *Clodia Metelli: The Tribune's Sister* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 105–112.

11 On the terminology of Isiac worship, the connection of other divinities to the core familial group Isis-Serapis/Osiris-Horus, and the local specificity of cult practice, see Michel Malaise, "La diffusion des cultes isiaques: un probleme de terminologie et de critique," in Laurent Bricault, Miguel John Versluys, and Paul G. P. Meyboom (eds.), *Nile into Tiber: Egypt in the Roman World: Proceedings of the IIIrd International*

Conference of Isis Studies, Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University, May 11–14, 2005 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 19–39.

12 Versluys 2004 thinks the evidence merely has to do with private altars and shrines, but Sandberg 2009 strongly reaffirms the existence of a public sanctuary.

13 Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 11.30.5. While the hermeneutic issues of Book 11 (on which see the authoritative study of John J. Winkler, *Auctor & Actor: A Narratological Reading of Apuleius's* The Golden Ass [Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1985], 204–247) might weaken trust in the factuality of this claim, its reliability is bolstered by other evidence (J. G. Griffiths, *Apuleius of Madauros, The Isis Book [*Metamorphoses*, Book XI]: Edition with an Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain 39 [Leiden: Brill, 1975], 343–345).

14 "Sarapis," the Greek form of the god's name, is commonly understood as a Hellenization of Egyptian *wsir-ḥp*, the hypostasis of Osiris and the mummified Apis bull (John E. Stambaugh, *Sarapis under the Early Ptolemies* [Leiden: Brill, 1972], 4–5). This essay employs the Latinized form "Serapis."

15 Valerius Maximus 1.3.4.

16 Takács 1995, 57–58.

17 *Ad Nationes* ("To the Nations") 1.10.

18 Eric M. Orlin ("Octavian and Egyptian Cults: Redrawing the Boundaries of Romanness," *American Journal of Philology* 129.2 [2008], 237) suspects connections between one or more of the Senate's acts of resistance to the cult and either the general nexus of political maneuvering or the express struggle over restoring Ptolemy. As we have seen, Gabinius, the official involved in the first of these incidents, later overstepped his proconsular authority to put the king back in power.

19 Dio Cassius 40.47.

20 Dio Cassius 42.26.2.

21 On the poetic *persona* see Marilyn B. Skinner, "*Ut decuit cinaediorem*: Power, Gender, and Urbanity in Catullus 10," *Helios* 16 (1989): 7–23; William Fitzgerald, *Catullan Provocations: Lyric Poetry and the Drama of Position* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1995), 169–179; Christopher Nappa, *Aspects of Catullus' Social Fiction* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001), 87–93; Kathleen McCarthy, "Secrets and Lies: Horace *carm*. 1.27 and Catullus 10," *Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici* 71 (2013): 45–74. For a possible subtext defending Memmius' administrative record, consult David Braund, "The Politics of Catullus 10: Memmius, Caesar and the Bithynians," *Hermathena* 160 (1996): 45–57; his reading is opposed by Francis Cairns, "Catullus in and about Bithynia: Poems 68, 10, 28 and 47," in David Braund and Christopher Gill (eds.), *Myth, History and Culture in Republican Rome: Studies in honour of T. P. Wiseman* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2003), 165–190.

22 For the litter as a symbol of effeminacy, see Nappa 2001, 126–131.

23 The fragment is preserved in Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* ("Attic Nights") 10.3.5.

24 *Verrines* ("Orations against Verres") 2.5.27.

25 *Pro Caelio* ("In Defense of Caelius") 23–24.

26 *Ad Quintum Fratrem* ("Letters to His Brother Quintus") 2.8.2.

27 T. P. Wiseman, "Who Was Gellius?" in *Cinna the Poet and Other Roman Essays* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1974), 119–129, assembles the scattered references to various *Gellii* into a *stemma*. The incest charges that dogged the clan may stem from a celebrated incident in which the consul's son, accused of seducing his stepmother and planning the murder of his father, was tried in a family council and found not guilty (Valerius Maximus 5.9.1).

28 Kenneth Kitchell, "*Et patruum reddidit Arpocraten*: A Re-interpretation of Catullus, c. 74," in Carl Deroux (ed.), *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History* III (Brussels: Latomus, 1983), 100–110; F. V. Hickson, "Patruus: Paragon or Pervert?" *Syllecta Classica* 4 (1993): 21–26; R. H. Simmons, "Deconstructing a Father's Love: Catullus 72 and 74," *Classical World* 104.1 (2010): 29–57.

29 Varro, *De lingua Latina* ("On the Latin Language") 5.57; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 9.692; Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* ("On Isis and Osiris") 68 (378C); Ausonius, *Epistulae* ("Letters") 24.27 (ed. Schenkl); Augustine, *De civitate Dei* ("On the City of God") 18.5.

30 E. S. Hall, "Harpocrates and Other Child Deities in Ancient Egyptian Sculpture," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 14 (1977): 55–58; Cristea Stefana, "Egyptian, Greek, Roman Harpocrates—A Protecting and Saviour God," in I. Moga (Coord.), *Angels, Demons and Representations of Afterlife within the Jewish, Pagan and Christian Imagery* (Iaşi: Editura Universităţii "Alexandru Ioan Cuza," 2013), 73–86.

31 At *pro Caelio* ("In Defense of Caelius") 26 Cicero refers to a Bestia who is obviously connected with the case. In the third edition of his commentary on the oration (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), 154–157, R. G. Austin identified this man as the biological father of Sempronius Atratinus, who had been adopted into the Sempronian *gens*. That Catullus is punning on the name was first suggested by Nathan Dane II ("Rufus Redolens," *Classical Journal* 64.3 [1968]: 130) and argued more extensively by J. D. Noonan ("*Mala Bestia* in Catullus 69.7–8," *Classical World* 73.3 [1979]:

155–165).

[32] For puns on *claudicatio* see Cicero, *De Oratore* ("On the Orator") 2.249. Based on the goat imagery in cc. 69 and 71, John Nicholson ("Goats and Gout in Catullus 71," *Classical World* 90.4 [1997]: 251–261) identifies the *aemulus* as Caelius Rufus and contends that the echo of c. 68.69, *communes exerceremus amores*, in 71.3, *vestrum exercet amorem*, reinforces the hint conveyed by *podagra* that the *puella* in question is Clodia.

[33] So argued by D. López-Cañete Quiles, "Sobre Catulo, 77 (In Caelium)," *Habis* 34 (2003): 123–147.

[34] Marilyn B. Skinner, *Catullus in Verona: A Reading of the Elegiac* libellus, *Poems 65–116* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2003), 91–93.

[35] D. F. S. Thomson characterizes the poem as "an 'occasional' epigram, of a private kind" (*Catullus: Edited with a Textual and Interpretative Commentary* [Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 1997], 53. Since it appears to have little to interest a third-party reader, one wonders why it was preserved. The addressee provides no clue: he might be Cornelius Nepos, to whom Catullus dedicates his *libellus* in c. 1, but the name, as Thomson observes, is common. D. W. T. C. Vessey ("A Cornelius Tacitus in Catullus?" *Liverpool Classical Monthly* 7.4 [1982]: 59 suggests a pun on a cognomen *Tacitus*, but even identifying a possible ancestor of the historian Cornelius Tacitus does nothing to shed light on the meaning. M. J. Edwards ("The Secret of Catullus 102," *Hermes* 118.3 [1990]: 382–38) thinks this Cornelius is the lover of the woman from Brixia mentioned at c. 67.35 and the poem is a further attempt to smear him. Nothing in the text indicates, however, that the secret confided is a disgraceful one, and an attempt to find implications of "pathic behavior" in the reference to Harpocrates founders on the fact that this time it is Catullus, not the addressee, who is rendered mute.

[36] The text is Mynors' Oxford Classical Text. In line 4, Thomson prints Schwabe's conjecture *putum*, but the word is not elsewhere attested other than in the phrase *purus putus*.

[37] Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 3.15. I am not claiming that Apuleius is alluding to Catullus, but instead using the later text to show that the link between *fides* as a communal virtue and the obligation of silence imposed upon religious initiates is a natural and easily understood one.

[38] B. E. Stevens, *Silence in Catullus* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 195–196 thinks the poem makes an "ironically ostentatious" profession when juxtaposed with the "natural silence of death" encountered in c. 101.

[39] Ian Du Quesnay, "Three Problems in Poem 66," in Ian Du Quesnay and Tony Woodman (eds.), *Catullus: Poems, Books, Readers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 153–162.

[40] J. D. Reed, "Arsinoe's Adonis and the Poetics of Ptolemaic Imperialism," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 130 (2000): 319–351 and Susan A. Stephens, *Seeing Double: Intercultural Poetics in Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003).

[41] Ludwig Koenen, "The Ptolemaic King as a Religious Figure," in Anthony Bulloch *et al*. (eds.), *Images and Ideologies: Self-Definition in the Hellenistic World* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 81–113.

[42] Koenen 1993, 89–90.

[43] *Iliad* 23.162–176.

[44] Daniel Selden, "Alibis," *Classical Antiquity* 17.2 (1998): 289–412; see especially 339–340 and 344–348.

[45] P. J. Parsons and R. Kassel, "*Callimachus*: Victoria Berenices," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 25 (1977): 1–51.

[46] Merkelbach 1995, 91 and n. 2 (for illustrative examples); on Callimachus' use of this syncretism to express the dual nature of Ptolemaic kingship, consult Selden 1998, 384–405.

[47] My thanks to the referee who suggested this line of inquiry and provided helpful references for exploring it. Cult inscriptions from the province are collected in Ladislaus Vidman (ed.), *Sylloge Inscriptionum Religiosis Isiacae et Serapicae* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1969), 165–171, nos. 324–333. David Magie, "Egyptian Deities in Asia Minor in Inscriptions and on Coins," *American Journal of Archaeology* 57.3 (1953): 163–187 offers a brief survey of epigraphic and numismatic evidence for this entire region. For a fuller discussion, see Françoise Dunand, *Le Culte d'Isis dans le bassin oriental de la Méditerranée*, 3 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1973); Pontus and Bithynia are treated in vol. III, *Le culte d'Isis en Asie Mineure: Clergé et ritual des sanctuaires isiaques*, 105–117.

[48] Most evidence for the popularity of Isiac cults in Pontus and Bithynia, to be sure, stems from a later period. Pliny the Younger reports to Trajan that a temple of Isis at Nicomedia had been destroyed by fire (*Epistulae* ["Letters"] 10.33.1), but we do not know when it was built. Coins and inscriptions are overwhelmingly of Imperial date, and the famous "origin story" of Serapis' cult statue at Alexandria, supposedly taken by Ptolomy I Soter from a temple of Hades at Sinope on the Black Sea coast, was probably also conceived in post-Augustan times. The fullest account of its removal is Tacitus, *Historiae* ("Histories") 4.83–84; a shorter version is found in Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* ("On Isis and Osiris") 28 (361F). Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* ("Exhortation") 4.48.4–6, who preserves a report that

the statue, commissioned by the Pharaoh Sesostris, was made by a Greek sculptor named Bryaxis. For commentary on this passage, see Wilhelm Hornbostel (*Sarapis: Studien zur Überlieferungsgeschichte, den Erscheinungsformen und Wandlungen der Gestalt eines Gottes* [Leiden: Brill, 1973], 35–58). On stylistic grounds, Hornhostel attributes the statue to the well-known fourth-century BCE sculptor of that name; the story of its transport from Sinope, he thinks, is an Imperial-age invention (127–130).

[49] Dunand 1973, 107–112.

[50] On the mainland of Asia Minor and the islands of the southwestern Aegean, Magie counts twenty-one sites with evidence of Isiac religion going back to Hellenistic times (1957, 180–181).

[51] Vidman 1969, 231.

[52] See H.-P. Syndikus, "Catull und die Politik," *Gymnasium* 93 (1986): 34–47; David Konstan, "Self, Sex, and Empire in Catullus: The Construction of a Decentered Identity," in V. Bécares Botas *et al*. (eds.), *Intertextualidad en las literaturas griega y latina*, Classica Salmaticensia 2 (Madrid: Ediciones Clasicas, 2000), 213–231 (online at: http://test.stoa.org/diotima/essays/konstan4.pdf); and W. J. Tatum, "Social Commentary and Political Invective," in Marilyn B. Skinner (ed.), *A Companion to Catullus* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 333–353.

[53] My thanks to Pearce Paul Creasman, director of the University of Arizona Egyptian Expedition, for providing welcome access to the *Online Egyptological Bibliography* (*OEB*).