



Catullus' Troy: Fear of Phrygia in Neoteric Rome

A Troia de Catulo: o medo da Frígia na Roma neotérica

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RESUMO: Troia e a tradição troiana desempenham um papel considerável na poesia de Catulo que chegou até nós, embora até o momento não tenha havido um estudo sistemático de todas as alusões à cidade de Príamo e à mitologia frígia em sua obra. Uma análise minuciosa das referências a Troia em Catulo revela uma preocupação significativa com o elemento troiano na lenda fundadora de Roma, de interesse tanto para uma melhor compreensão do poeta quanto como um precursor do envolvimento mais sistemático de Virgílio com os mesmos temas em sua épica.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Catulo; Troia; Frígia.

ABSTRACT: Troy and Trojan lore plays an appreciable role in the extant poetry of Catullus, though to date there has been no systematic study of all of the allusions to Priam's city and Phrygian mythology in his corpus. Close examination of the references to Troy in Catullus reveals a noteworthy concern with the Trojan element in the foundation lore of Rome, of interest both for a better understanding of the poet and as a precursor to Virgil's more systematic engagement with the same themes in his epic.

KEYWORDS: Catullus; Troy; Phrygia.

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Among the Catullan polymetrics, c. 35 merits special attention². The hendecasyllabic poem incorporates a number of noteworthy topics: neoteric poetic composition, passionate (indeed, all-consuming) love, allusion to Sappho, and, not least, the Trojan mother goddess Cybele³. Catullus' message for his friend Caecilius is a key piece of the puzzle for exploring the question of the place of Troy in Roman mythology and the Roman conception of identity at an important juncture in republican history, indeed at a transformational moment for a republic of increasingly imperial character⁴. Troy lore would be a particularly potent subject for a republic that was increasingly involved in eastern affairs, not least in the very region where once Priam's city held sway. Careful study of the Catullan corpus reveals a series of allusions to Troy and to the goddess Cybele, analysis of which will allow for preliminary consideration of how Rome's Trojan origins were addressed at least by one significant figure in the neoteric poetic revolution. Apart from the question of Catullus' possible influence on such later authors as Virgil, exploration of Troy and Trojan themes in his poems may provide an interesting window into the attitude of the lyric poet toward Gaius Julius Caesar in particular⁵. While much work has been done on individual problems posed by the relevant Catullan poems, less attention has been paid to considering whether there is any overarching argument in the poet's *œuvre* regarding Troy and the place of Troy in the Roman consciousness at a transformational historical movement.

The poem with which we shall commence our study poses a simple problem, of rich import. Catullus wants Caecilius to visit him, but his friend is distracted by an unnamed romantic interest. The rationale for the visit is so that Catullus may share some thoughts with his friend; the subject of the *cogitationes* is left vague. Indeed, the exact identity of the one who wants to see Caecilius is expressed with impish refusal to be direct and straightforward⁶. Caecilius is clearly preoccupied; he needs persuasion. The scenario is not some familiar elegiac drama in which the boy is hopelessly forlorn on account of unrequited love for a girl. Quite the contrary: the boy is the object of adulation. In the last third of the poem, we learn about the literary reason for why Caecilius' girlfriend is madly smitten with him:

² On c. 35 note F. O. Copley, "Catullus, 35," in *The American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 74, No. 2 (1953), pp. 140–60, H. Akbar Khan, "Catullus 35: And the Things Poetry Can Do to You!," in *Hermes*, 102. Bd., H. 3 (1974), pp. 475–90, E.A. Fredericksmeier, "Catullus to Caecilius on Good Poetry (C. 35)," in *The American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 106, No. 2 (Summer, 1985), pp. 213–21, G.G. Biondi, "Il carme 35 di Catullo," in *Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici*, No. 41 (1998), pp. 35–69, V. Hunink, "Some Thoughts of a Friend": Catul. 35,5–6," in *Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici*, No. 45 (2000), pp. 133–6, D. Kutzo, "Lesbia in Catullus 35," in *Classical Philology*, Vol. 101, No. 4 (October 2006), pp. 405–10, W.S. Hansen, "Caecilius' Response to the Invitation in Catullus 35," in *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 102, No. 3 (Feb.–Mar., 2007), pp. 213–20, and L. Kronenberg, "Me, Myself, and I: Multiple (Literary) Personalities in Catullus 35," in *The Classical World*, Vol. 107, No. 3 (Spring 2014), pp. 367–81.

³ On the tensions inherent to the question of Rome's Trojan origins, see B. Dufallo, *Disorienting Empire: Republican Latin Poetry's Wanderers*, Oxford, 2021, p. 173.

⁴ For the format of the poem, note E. Barbiero, "Lyric Letters: Reading the Epistolarity of Catullus c. 35 and 50," in *Studi italiani di filologia classica* 1 (2023), pp. 31–58.

⁵ The subject is a vast and popular one; c. 93 has been mined significantly, e.g., for all its brevity. Cf. here W.C. Scott, "Catullus and Caesar (c. 29)," in *Classical Philology*, Vol. 66, No. 1 (Jan., 1971), pp. 17–25.

⁶ Cf. c. 35.6 *amici accipiat sui meique*, where the language is both clear and oblique.

nam quo tempore legit incohatam
 Dindymi dominam, ex eo misellae
 ignes interiorem edunt medullam. 15
 ignosco te, Sapphica puella
 musa doctior; est enim venuste
 Magna Caecilio incohata Mater⁷.

Caecilius has commenced a work that may have opened with the resoundingly alliterative *Dindymi dominam* as declaration of its subject, at least in Catullus' literary (and possibly fictitious) account of the situation⁸. We cannot be certain, not least on account of our ignorance of the meter of the purported work⁹. Catullus' wish is for Caecilius to come to Verona from Como, for the sake of receiving certain musings from his artistic colleague¹⁰. This is not a case where Catullus wants to know details about his friend's relationship¹¹; he knows enough about her, and he is interested rather in sharing thoughts about the Cybele poem, we might well surmise. Advice about the girl may also be on the agenda; c. 35 plays with the idea that there are actually two *dominae* in Caecilius' life: his *puella*, and the goddess Cybele. If Catullus' "Lesbia" recalls Sappho, then the point in part may be that Caecilius' *Sapphica puella musa doctior* is more dangerous than Catullus' own object of infatuation: she has cast an especially powerful spell by virtue of her favorable critical verdict.

It can be perilous to try to draw connections between adjacent Catullan lyrics, or to explore the question of the possible significance of the arrangement of poems in the surviving corpus¹². We lack definitive information about the transmission of the text. That said, it is striking that c. 35 with its focus on a Cybele poem follows on Catullus' hymn to Diana, *Dianae sumus in fide*¹³; we move from the poet's glyconic song in honor of the goddess of the hunt, to his allusion to the great work on Cybele that his friend Caecilius is in the process of composing¹⁴. Catullus offers a hymn to one goddess, and then he wants to provide advice to a friend about his own goddess composition; the two deities invite comparison¹⁵. Neither deity would seem to be particularly well suited to a scene of passionate romance.

Caecilius' girlfriend is enamored of his verse; Catullus offers a passing compliment to her that may be more sarcastic than sincere. The artfully interlocked word order of Catullus' vocative *Sapphica*

⁷ Quotes from Catullus are taken from D. F. S. Thomson, *Catullus: Edited with Textual and Interpretive Commentary*, Toronto, 1997 (corrected edition, 1998). For commentary *ad loc.*, in addition to Thomson see especially C. J. Fordyce, *Catullus*, Oxford, 1961.

⁸ Ancient works were often known by the first words.

⁹ See here K. Quinn, *Catullus: The Poems*, London: Macmillan, 1970 (second edition 1973), *ad loc.* For convenience's sake we shall refer to Caecilius' composition by this name, without any prejudice to arguments about what sort of work Catullus had in mind. That said, the fact that Catullus refers to the poet's appreciative girlfriend with reference to Sappho may point to a composition that was not in hexametric.

¹⁰ "Caecilius" is otherwise unknown. The commentators usually associate him with the family of Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus, but we cannot be certain.

¹¹ Cf. the subject of c. 6.

¹² On the arrangement of the poems of this section of the corpus, and commonalities between them, see P. Y. Forsyth, "The Lady and the Poem: Catullus 35-42," in *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 80, No. 1 (Oct.-Nov., 1984), pp. 24-6.

¹³ On this hymn note L. Fratantuono, "Montium Domina: Catullus' Diana, Rome, and the Moon's Bastard Light," in *Acta Classica*, Vol. 58 (2015), pp. 27-46.

¹⁴ With Caecilius' poem on Cybele, one may compare the *Zmyrna* of Calvus that is the subject of c. 95.

¹⁵ Interestingly, c. 36 then follows with a return to the theme of a girl involved in matters involving literary productivity and the relative value of poetic compositions.

puella musa doctior is richly connotative, though its exact import is deliberately enigmatic¹⁶. The precise meaning of “Sapphic muse” is open to debate¹⁷. The carefully crafted reference to Caecilius’ work is marked by similarly evocative, effective word play: *Magna ... Mater* embraces its verse, and the crucial adverb *venuste* makes one think of Venus¹⁸. Catullus is characteristically economical; an impressive number of challenging allusions are arrayed in brief compass.

The author of the nascent work on Cybele has at least one ardent admirer, and the Cybele poem has resulted in the seeming favor of Venus toward the poet’s relationship. Caecilius’ *puella* is consumed by the fires of passion; the flames are described as eating her innermost marrow; the poem on the Great Mother is the cause. Her intense infatuation is the reason why Caecilius must be importuned to come from Como to Verona; the Cybele-poet finds it difficult to leave his favorite reader.

We know nothing about the content of Caecilius’ *Dindymi dominam*. We have mentioned Catullus’ Diana hymn; his surviving work also includes a meditation on Cybele, though not of the sort that some may imagine would have been enthralling for Caecilius’ *puella*. Catullus’ celebrated Attis poem (c. 63) is a galliambic masterpiece devoted to the story of an ill-fated, would-be votary of Cybele¹⁹. Whatever one makes of the dazzling (and dizzying) twists and turns of the quasi-cinematic narrative of Attis’ self-mutilation, his coming to his senses, and the ultimate triumph of the goddess via her leonine avatar, one thing is certain: Catullus’ poem ends on a note of horror, in testament to the terrifying power of the *Magna Mater*²⁰. And at its very close, Catullus allusively recalls his friend’s composition:

*dea, magna dea, Cybebe, dea domina Dindymi,
procul a mea tuos sit furor omnis, era, domo:
alios age incitatos, alios age rabidos.* (c. 63.91–3)

The language echoes the probable nod to the title of Caecilius’ poem at c. 35.14 *Dindymi dominam*, as Catullus invokes the goddess and asks that her fury may be directed at homes other than his own. The poem becomes something of a talismanic creation, an avatar in itself, designed to avert the goddess; Catullus wishes to be spared from her power. Given the hazards that lurk at home (not least on account of imported cult practices), venturing to such a place as Troy is doubly perilous, and it is no surprise that Catullus’ own treatment of Cybele lore closes with a

¹⁶ J. K. Schafer, *Catullus through His Books: Dramas of Composition*, Cambridge, 2020, pp. 218–9 sees a possible reference to Troy in the final stanza of c. 51, the celebrated *hommage* to Sappho, c. 31 Lobel-Page, in line with other scholars; see further below on the implications of any such allusion.

¹⁷ T. S. Thorsen and S. Harrison, eds., *Roman Receptions of Sappho*, Oxford, 2019, offers an excellent survey of a challenging topic.

¹⁸ On the poet’s use of vocabulary derived from the goddess’ name, see S.F. Wiltshire, “Catullus Venustus,” in *The Classical World*, Vol. 70, No. 5 (Feb., 1977), pp. 319–26.

¹⁹ The bibliography is of impressive range and depth; S. Harrison, “Altering Attis: Ethnicity, Gender, and Genre in Catullus 63,” in *Mnemosyne*, Fourth Series, Vol. 57, Fasc. 5, Catullus 63 (2004), pp. 520–33, and (in the same issue), R. R. Nauta, “Catullus 63 in a Roman Context,” pp. 596–628, R. R. Nauta and A. Harder, eds., *Catullus’ Poem on Attis: Text and Contexts*, Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2005.

²⁰ For the idea that Catullus was interested in Caecilius’ work because he was engaged in a similar composition, see W. V. Clausen “The New Direction in Poetry,” in E.J. Kenney, ed., *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, Volume II, Part 2, *The Late Republic*, 1983 (first paperback edition of the 1982 original), p. 6.

plea that the madness she incites might pass him over. The fact that its last line invites her to strike others rabid with frenzy is a reminder that the goddess will have her victim, whoever he may be.

There is another, less appreciated, yet key connection between c. 35 and c. 63. At the opening of his whimsical address to his papyrus about sending Caecilius a message, Catullus refers to his friend as “delicate” or “soft”: *poetae tenero* (c. 35.1)²¹. The adjective evokes the sort of poetry that Caecilius has been noted for, one might think; it is a carefully chosen descriptor, of the sort that can be difficult to define precisely in context. At the close of c. 63, the same adjective recurs as Cybele’s lion spies its prey on the shore: *teneramque vidit Attin prope Marmora pelagi* (c. 63.88), where we are reminded (as elsewhere in the poem) that Attis is now female²². Both Caecilius and Attis are in essentially the same position; both are susceptible to a *domina*, indeed under her sway. The circumstances are different; the consequences may not be entirely dissimilar. While we cannot be sure of the original dissemination of Catullus’ works, or of the way in which the poems may have been grouped together, it is noteworthy that the adjective *tener* (which is often not without its metapoetic implications) is used in prominent place at the start of the one and toward the close of the other Catullan Cybele poem²³.

The locus of Cybele’s frightful influence and impressive sway is Phrygia. Phrygian Troy is associated sadly in Catullus’ verse on a personal level with the burial of his brother²⁴; c. 101 (*Multas per gentes*) constitutes an elegiac memorial for the poet’s relative that does not dwell *per se* on the subject of the locale of the loss²⁵. Such treatment of the significance of a given place dominates the challenging, complex couplets of one of Catullus’ most perplexing and opaque creations, the longer poem (or poems) known as 68a–b²⁶. Here the reader encounters a rendition of the myth of Protesilaus and Laodamia, or the story of the first casualty of the war at Troy.

The principal puzzle of c. 68 is the question of unity: one poem or two? Valiant efforts have been made to see the work as an integral composition, indeed as a brilliant, precocious exercise of the poet’s craft. Familiar autobiographical details abound, either genuine or literary fictions²⁷: Catullus mentions the death of his brother, with reference to how the loss put an end to the playful joy of his earlier life (c. 68a 19–20 *sed totum hoc stadium luctu fraterna mors mihi / abstulit ...*)²⁸. Before long,

²¹ See here especially Fordyce *ad loc.*, who notes that for Martial (7.14.3, 12.44.5) Catullus himself is *tener*.

²² Cf. here M. B. Skinner, “*Ego mulier*: The Construction of Male Sexuality in Catullus,” in *Helios* 20.2 (1993), pp. 107–30.

²³ On the vexed question of the ancient Catullan *liber* or *libri*, see D. Kiss, “The Protohistory of the Text of Catullus,” in J. Velaza, ed., *From the Protohistory to the History of the Text*, (Studien zur klassischen Philologie, Band 173), Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2016, pp. 125–40, which provides a useful *précis* of the status of the question.

²⁴ For the question of historical background (including date), see I. Du Quesnay, “Three Poems in Poem 66,” in I. Du Quesnay and T. Woodman, eds., *Catullus: Poems, Books, Readers*, Cambridge, 2012, p. 160.

²⁵ Cf. here A. Feldherr, “*Non inter nota sepulcra*: Catullus 101 and Roman Funerary Ritual,” in *Classical Antiquity*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Oct., 2000), pp. 209–31 and T. R. J. Hockings, “Notes on the Text and Interpretation of Catullus 101,” in *Mnemosyne*, Vol. 71, Fasc. 4 (2018), pp. 693–701.

²⁶ For a start to this poem see T. Kinsey, “Some Problems in Catullus 68,” in *Latomus*, T. 26, Fasc. 1 (janvier-mars 1967), pp. 35–53, R. McClure, “The Structure of Catullus 68,” in *California Studies in Classical Antiquity*, Vol. 7 (1974), pp. 215–29, P. Levene, “Catullus c. 68: A New Perspective,” in *California Studies in Classical Antiquity*, Vol. 9 (1976), pp. 61–88, D. F. Bright, “*Confectum Carmine Munus*: Catullus 68,” in *Illinois Classical Studies*, Vol. 1 (1976), pp. 86–112, and C. J. Tuplin, “Catullus 68,” in *The Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (1981), pp. 113–39.

²⁷ The question of the extent of an autobiographical strand in Catullus’ verse (not least in the longer poems) is a perennial problem; for a start to a vast bibliography, see P. Y. Forsyth, “Catullus: The Mythic Persona,” in *Latomus*, T. 35, Fasc. 3 (juillet-septembre 1976), pp. 555–66.

²⁸ For how the loss rendered Catullus bereft of a home, see A. De Villiers, “The Liminality of Loss: Catullus on His Brother’s Death,” in *Acta Classica* 63.1 (2020), pp. 111–24.

whether in the course of one poem or two, we learn of the poet's benefactor and of a fateful episode in his relationship with his beloved. Lesbia's arrival at Allius' house is spoiled by her ominous, squeaky sandal at the threshold (c. 68b.71-2 *intulit et trito fulgentem in limine plantam / innixa arguta constituit solea*); Catullus is inspired to recall Laodamia's coming to the house of Protesilaus in vain (c. 68b.73-5 *coniugis ut quondam flagrans advenit amore / Protesilaëam Laodamia domum / inceptam frustra ...*)²⁹. In other words, there is a healthy dose of self-dramatization, of the sort not unfamiliar to elegy: the poet and his romantic difficulties are associated with memorable mythological episodes. Whether the Lesbia relationship is to be interpreted at face value, or to be read metapoetically, the point remains that the comparand for the ominous episode is Laodamia. One *L-a* recalls another; in terms of meditating on a contemporary love affair, the allusion to Laodamia and her slain husband may seem more or less faintly ridiculous, but Catullus is eager to inveigh against a particular place.

Troy was destined to take Protesilaus, just as it seized Catullus' brother: *Troia (nefas!) commune sepulcrum Asiae Europaeque, / Troia virum et virtutum omnium acerba cinis* (c. 68b.89-90). Personal loss is associated with the most renowned of ancient conflicts; Troy is a veritably unspeakable name (*nefas*), not only because of its status as the common grave of Asia and Europe, but also because of the burial of the poet's brother³⁰. And, besides, if Lesbia is reminiscent of Laodamia, then Catullus is cast as Protesilaus; both brothers are envisaged as meeting their doom in Troy.

Catullus' language becomes markedly more hostile toward Troy as he reflects on the location of his brother's ashes:

*quem nunc tam longe non inter nota sepulcra
nec prope cognatos compositum cineres,
sed Troia obscena, Troia infelice sepultum
detinet extremo terra aliena solo.* (c. 68b.97-100)

This is the only surviving Catullan poem that mentions *Troia* by name³¹; the powerful, fivefold anaphora in the span of a dozen lines indicts the ancient city like a recurring, accusatory drumbeat. Indeed, Troy is portrayed as being the active instigator of troubles:

*nam tum Helenae raptu primores Argivorum
coeperat ad sese Troia ciere viros* (c. 68b.87-8)

The abduction of Helen is what summoned Argive heroes to what was destined to be the common grave of two continents³². We are not told the circumstances surrounding the loss of the poet's brother, but the story of what resulted from the involvement of Paris with Helen is all too familiar.

²⁹ On the disputed question of exactly why Protesilaus was doomed (with reference to the Catullan version of neglected, imperfect ritual), see R. F. Thomas, "An Alternative to Ceremonial Negligence (Catullus 68.73-78)," in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, Vol. 82 (1978), pp. 175-8.

³⁰ See further here A. M. Seider, "Catullan Myths: Gender, Mourning, and the Death of a Brother," in *Classical Antiquity*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (October 2016), pp. 279-314.

³¹ "Cybele" is named only in c. 63 (12, 68, 76); cf. allusions to Phrygia at c. 46.4, 61.18, 63.2, 20, 71, and c. 64.344, to Mount Dindymon at c. 35.14, 63.13 and 91, and to Rhoeteum at c. 65.7-8.

³² This is the only reference to Helen in Catullus; see further here L. Fratantuono and J. Braff, "Communis Erinys: The Image of Helen in the Latin Poets," in *L'Antiquité classique*, T. 81 (2012), pp. 43-60.

Catullus' language is direct and harsh: Troy is *obsceña*, and the adjectives *alienus* and *extremus* emphasize both the foreignness of the region, and its distance from Rome. This is a territory both strange and far off; no solace whatsoever is to be taken in the locus for the brother's grave. Troy destroyed the heroes of two continents, and it holds the ashes of Catullus' beloved brother.

We may thus adduce two rationales for Catullus' hostility toward Troy: the death and burial of his brother in the Troad, and the destruction that resulted from the abduction of Helen. Nowhere in the extant work of the poet is there any allusion to the escape of Aeneas and his followers from the region, or to the connection of Troy to the origins of Rome³³. There is no hint of the association of Troy with Roman foundation lore, no sense that Rome has any connection to Troy via the line of descent from Aeneas to Iulus down through the ages to the present, Caesarian hour. Troy is associated not with rebirth and the promise of a glorious renewal in a new land. Rather, Troy is funereal, and the goddess Cybele evokes frenzy and uncontrollable, destructive fury. Her place in a Roman context is problematic, requiring finesse and management³⁴.

Certainly the cult of the Trojan mother goddess was considered a foreign one in Catullus' day, despite its having existed in Italy since the third century B.C. Cybele is a figure of negative import in the case of Attis and his fanatical self-emasculation and subsequent regrets³⁵. The Caecilius *Dindymi dominam* poses a different set of problems. Here we know that Catullus wants to confer with his fellow poet, and that Caecilius' *puella* is restraining him (intoxicated as she is by his Cybele poem). Catullus urges Caecilius to come all the same; part of the implicit game of the lyric is that Cybele is a goddess who demands emasculation of her devotees. Catullus' preceding hymn is to Diana, the chaste sylvan goddess; she does not demand castration, but love affairs are not welcome in her forest realm. If there is a strong hint in c. 35 that Caecilius' Cybele poem needs improvement, we do not know the problems the prompted Catullus' intervention. But what we do know is significant: Caecilius' work has inspired his *puella*'s amorous devotion, a state of affairs that does not accord with the traditional conception of the worship of Cybele and the demands that she enjoins on her votaries. Catullus wishes to draw Caecilius away from the frenzied girl, possessed as she is by the flame in her marrow. The Diana-poet is eager to remove his colleague from the scene of Cybele-induced infatuation and passion.

There may be no reflection in Catullus on the place of Troy in the foundation mythology of Rome and her origins, but there is a connection between eastern realms and contemporary political and military realities. Certainly Catullus' poems evince an interest in the implications of Rome's imperialist expansion³⁶. Whatever one thinks of the origins of Rome, what is certain is that in Catullus' day, Asia Minor was part of a vast program of Roman overseas domination. One of the most elegantly concise expressions of his reflections on this theme comes in the seemingly idyllic scene he paints of Septimius and Acme, where the apparently successful union of the couple is summarized in language

³³ Cf. the references to Romulus and Remus, including the concluding petition to Diana regarding protection of the *gens Romuli* at c. 34.21-4.

³⁴ There is a helpful overview by W. Suerbaum, "Trojanische Götter in Latium?," in W. Suerbaum, *Vergils Aeneis*, Stuttgart: Reclams Universal-Bibliothek, 1999, p. 198.

³⁵ On the regrets of Attis see especially T. Barbaud, *Catulle: Une poétique de l'indicible* (Bibliothèque d'études classiques 47), Louvain-Paris-Dudley, Massachussets: Peeters, 2006, pp. 96-102.

³⁶ Cf., *inter al.*, c. 29 and the question of Mamurra's greed, where there are allusions to the wealth of both western and eastern realms that have come under Roman sway (or at least been the scene of Roman expansionist operations).

that alludes to both recent western (i.e., Caesarian) and eastern (i.e., Pompeian) overseas Roman military adventures³⁷:

*unam Septimius misellus Acmen
mavult quam Syrias Britanniasque* (c. 45.21-2)

Mention of Syria recalls the recent efforts of Pompey the Great in one theater, while Britain evokes Caesar's adventures in Gaul and beyond. The same all-encompassing geographical allusions to Roman imperialism may be found in lengthier expression at c. 11.1-12, in the catalogue-like preliminary address to his associates Furius and Aurelius, before Catullus' *comites* are entrusted with the poet's message to his faithless *puella*. In both poems, overseas glory and the vision of the burgeoning republic are juxtaposed with amatory scenarios (of opposite import). The coupling of Septimius and Acme features onomastic evocation of a joining of Rome and Greece; there is a seemingly simple thesis at play: the lover prefers the object of his affection to any opportunity for wealth, glory, and self-aggrandizement in a foreign realm.

But there is also a certain element of bravado to be found in c. 45, which again strikes a familiar, elegiac note: Septimius alludes to facing a Libyan or an Indian lion (c. 45.2-7) as a testament to the enduring quality of his passion³⁸. The detail is conditional; if his ardor is not as intense and perennial as he claims, then he is willing to face a ravenous beast alone (we may compare the different situation of the lion of Cybele that confronted Attis). The boasts of Septimius are part of the elegiac game; the lover at repose evokes the image of hazard and risk, even as he rests in lazy embrace with his beloved. He has no intention of pursuing overseas glory and renown; such risk (notwithstanding the chance for wealth and fame) is not to be undertaken at the price of leaving one's beloved.

Further, there is a direct echo between the Acme and Septimius poem and the Caecilius lyric. The connection comes in the response that Acme makes to Septimius with respect to his dramatic declaration of the intensity of his passion:

*'sic' inquit 'mea vita Septimille,
huic uni domino usque serviamus,
ut multo mihi maior acriorque
ignis mollihus ardet in medullis.'* (c. 45.13-6)³⁹

The passage echoes almost exactly the same line numbers of c. 35, where the impetus for the exceptional devotion of Caecilius' *puella* is given temporal clarification:

*nam quo tempore legit incohatam
Dindymi dominam, ex eo misellae
ignes interiorem edunt medullam* (c. 35.13-5)

³⁷ On this poem see further H. Akbar Khan, "Catullus 45: What Sort of Irony?," in *Latomus*, T. 27, Fasc. 1 (janvier-mars 1968), pp. 3-12, R. Kitzinger, "Reading Catullus 45," in *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 87, No. 3 (Feb.-Mar., 1992), pp. 209-17, and F. Cairns, "Catullus 45: Text and Interpretation," in *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, Vol. 55, No. 2 (Dec., 2005), pp. 534-41.

³⁸ On the impetus for Septimius' "heroic bluster," see D. West, *Horace Odes III Dulce Periculum* ..., Oxford, 2002, p. 93.

³⁹ On this passage cf. H. Dietz, "Zu Catulls Gedicht von Acme und Septimius," in *Symbolae Osloenses* 44.1 (1969), pp. 42-7.

Acme wants the fire of love to grow every more ardently in the innermost marrow. Septimius spoke of being willing meet a lion in a hot locale, should his passion not be sufficiently intense (c. 45.6 ... *Indiaque tosta*); Acme (true to the implicitly superlative character of her name) speaks of her desire for an internal, destructive burning – exactly the sort of fiery love that has taken hold of Caecilius' girlfriend after reading his *Dindymi dominam*. Acme wishes for an ever fiercer flame to burn in the soft marrow: the sacrificial fire, one might say, that is lit as testament to service to Amor as *dominus*⁴⁰. Septimius has an outward look, Acme an inward; Septimius would rather stay with Acme than seek fame and fortune abroad, while Acme is eager to see an *acrior ignis* burn internally. Such flames burn but do not consume, but the image is no less destructive for its perennial, enduring character.

So far, matters are relatively straightforward: the *amator* prefers to remain with the girl (whether the fictional Septimius, or the likely historical Caecilius). The love affair that unites a seemingly happy couple is metaphorically fiery. Where we find an interesting juxtaposition of the commonplace elegiac theme and Catullus' interest in Phrygia is to be found in the Helen story⁴¹: Troy was the locus for the disastrous love affair of Paris and the wife of Menelaus, a love that resulted in flames that were all too real. We have noted that some critics have associated Catullus' reference to how *otium* has destroyed blessed cities and kings with the ruin of Troy⁴². Whether the closing stanza of c. 51 alludes intentionally to Troy or not, what emerges from elsewhere in the poet's work is the fact that Troy was the locus for a dangerous amorous liaison, a love affair gone awry that spelled ruinous consequences for the Mediterranean world⁴³. The plural *reges* and *urbes* that Catullus cites is a testament to the all too common theme; Troy was by no means unique, even if it was the most enduring and dramatic example. *Otium* can destroy cities; Catullus may have seen a hint of Menelaus and Paris in the Sapphic narrative of a lovesick man watching his rival sit with the object of his affections. Whatever the case, Troy is an urban symbol of the risks inherent even to the exercise of leisure. The flames that burned internally for Paris and Helen escalated to the fire that consumed the lover's city.

Further, we have noted that the name of Catullus' Acme evokes not only Greek origins, but the notion of exceptionality; when it comes to the matter of erotic desire and the "acme" of Greek loveliness, one may well think of Helen. Implicit to Catullus' reflections is the ominous fact that the steps between all of these stages are brief indeed.

At least two threads have been uncovered in our investigation of Catullus' Troy: the connection of Priam's city to amatory peril, and the potential horror associated with the ecstatic worship of the Phrygian *Magna Mater*. These hazards pose an interesting juxtaposition, given that Cybele is connected with emasculation. We may note, too, that the Attis poem comes as part of an interesting sequence: two weddings poems precede it, one (c. 61) marked by nuptial joy, the other (c. 62) featuring a debate between rival choruses, in which the girls give voice to concerns and complaints about submission to

⁴⁰ Cf. c. 45.14.

⁴¹ Cf. c. 68b.87-8.

⁴² Cf. further here J. M. Duban, *The Lesbian Lyre: Reclaiming Sappho for the 21st Century*, Russet: Clairview Books Ltd., 2016, pp. 320-1.

⁴³ Note here, too, the argument that the *magna bella* of c. 37.13 are meant to evoke the Trojan War, with Catullus cast in the role of Menelaus, and his beloved as Helen (so M. Johnson, "Catullus, c. 37, and the Theme of *Magna Bella*," in *Helios* 26.1 (1999), pp. 85-96, p. 95; cf. D. Wray, *Catullus and the Poetics of Roman Manhood*, Cambridge, 2004, p. 84).

a spouse. After c. 63, we have the celebrated epyllion of the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, a (perhaps) blessed union that resulted in the birth of Achilles, the hero of the Greek victory over Troy⁴⁴.

One should resist the temptation to oversimplify or to impose rigid schematization where it is not warranted⁴⁵. That said, it is possible to trace ominous connections: a path may be marked, from nuptial bliss to second thoughts and, in the end, the reality of Troy and all its associations. Among the dire events that unfolded in the wake of the destruction of Priam's city was the brutal fate of one of the king's daughters. The song of the Fates at the Peleus wedding includes its own perverse rendition of a future quasi-nuptial union, in its climactic prediction of how the virgin Polyxena will be slain on the burial mound of Achilles (c. 64.362-71)⁴⁶. "The mismatched wedding of Peleus and Thetis turns out to be brief and productive only of destruction and infertility."⁴⁷ Troy is linked to the death of the great hero, the son of Peleus and Thetis whose grave will be the site of the sacrifice of a virgin to his shade⁴⁸. And so the grim list grows longer: the death of a brother, the self-emasculation of Attis and his subjugation to Cybele, the ruinous involvement of Paris and Helen (with its dire consequences for Trojan and Greek alike), and Polyxena's brutal slaying all occur in association with Phrygia, which was also the place where Laodamia's Protesilaus was the first Greek to die in the great war. The depressing catalogue is not relieved by any charm or event of optimistic import; the closest we come to anything lighthearted in connection to Troy is the ostensibly successful relationship of Caecilius and his obsessive girl.

It is to Caecilius and his *Sapphica puella musa doctior* that we must return, not least on account of Catullus' reaction to their apparently passionate romance: he wants his colleague to leave the scene of his apparent bliss, and to come to Verona. We know little about Caecilius' girl, other than the comment that Catullus offers on her critical acumen (which may be interpreted with a healthy dose of sarcasm). The *candida puella* is the one described as being hopelessly enraptured; presumably Caecilius is amenable and subject to her charms, but one element of their relationship is made implicitly clear: there is no appeal of the chase, or of the pleasure of wanting something as opposed to having it. Caecilius has won the girl (at least for the moment), via the medium of his Cybele poem. He may learn all too soon that wanting something can be more enjoyable than possessing it; there is also the chance that his girlfriend's (fiery) passion may prove destructive.

Does Catullus seek to save Caecilius from the *impotens amor* (c. 35.12) of the obsessed *puella*? Even in Como, it seems, Cybele has inspired frenzy and passion. It is not the same sort of rabid fury as that which we find with Attis in Phrygia. But it is a fiery, all-consuming love, one that is the result not so much of Caecilius himself as of his *Dindymi dominam* composition. Cybele and Troy are not

⁴⁴ For a metonymic reading of Achilles and Troy in Catullus as "epic synonyms for the treachery and suffering of the (Catullan) world," see M. Petrini, *The Child and the Hero: Coming of Age in Catullus and Vergil*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997, p. 115.

⁴⁵ For a cautious exploration of the degree to which there is a strain in the longer poems of the same seemingly autobiographical current as in the shorter lyrics, see P. W. Harkins, "Autoallegory in Catullus 63 and 64," in *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, Vol. 90 (1959), pp. 102-16.

⁴⁶ On the significance of this attestation of the Polyxena myth, see S. Papaioannou, *Redesigning Achilles* (Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte, Band 89), Berlin-New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007, pp. 233-4.

⁴⁷ So K. Wasdin, *Eros at Dusk: Ancient Wedding and Love Poetry*, Oxford, 2018, p. 165.

⁴⁸ For a perceptive consideration of the influence of the poet's depiction of the hero, see M. C. J. Putnam, "Virgil and the Achilles of Catullus," in P. Mitsis and I. Ziogas, eds., *Wordplay and Powerplay in Latin Poetry*, Berlin-Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2016, pp. 151-68.

auspicious deities when it comes to amatory affairs; Catullus has thoughts to share with his implicitly imperiled colleague, perhaps on account of his poetry and the passion it has engendered. Caecilius is facing frenzy on two levels: the fury associated with Cybele, which he controls as poet and author of the work on the goddess, and the fury of his *puella*, the passion that his poem has conjured, over which he does not have complete control.

We have mentioned the association of the Troad with the requiem for Catullus' brother. Catullus possibly (if not probably) served under Gaius Memmius in Bithynia in 57–6 B.C.⁴⁹; the end of this tenure is reflected in c. 46, where the poet speaks of returning home (though not without a visit first to the more noteworthy cities of the region)⁵⁰:

*linquantur Phrygii, Catulle, campi
Niceaeque ager uber aestuosae:
ad claras Asiae volemus urbes.* (c. 46.4–6)

This is a valediction to western Bithynia, though not a farewell that will neglect tourist travel to celebrated locales of Asia Minor. Ultimately Catullus and his colleagues will return home to Italy, albeit by different and leisurely routes (9–11)⁵¹. On account of Rome's political and military entanglements in the east, Catullus was part of a more elite class of young men that enjoyed the opportunity to visit and work in a region associated with a rich mythology connected to the very origins of Rome⁵². Coteries like that of Catullus and his colleagues serve as managers of imperial ambition; the journey eastward was a homecoming of one sort, that westward of another.

There is no question that for Catullus, Troy is a problematic place; the hazards of the environs are connected in a peculiar way to risks associated with love and sexuality. In Catullus' exploration of Trojan themes, the madness that is endemic to the region (typified by the frightful power of Cybele) is of severe and varied consequence. Leaving aside the personal trauma of any historical loss of a brother in the region, for Catullus Troy is a paradigmatic example of something foreign and remote; its otherness stands in striking contrast to Rome and Italy.

Any negative verdict on Troy by Catullus may have been influential on Virgil in his direct engagement with Rome's Phrygian origins⁵³. Unlike Catullus, Virgil is focused on exploring the implications of the fall of Troy and Aeneas' westward, Hesperian journey; the *Aeneid* is devoted to

⁴⁹ The evidence for this biographical detail, however, is from Catullus himself; see further here Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 5. The fact is that we can say very little with confidence about the poet's life, though what we can glean from c. 10, 28.7–9, 31, and 46 is plausible and representative of a not atypical career for the period.

⁵⁰ On this lyric see further C. J. Simpson and B. G. Simpson, "Catullus 46," in *Latomus*, T. 48, Fasc. 1 (janvier-mars 1989), pp. 75–85.

⁵¹ For a perceptive study of the significance of the theme of travel and "incurable nostalgia" in Catullus' work, see R. Armstrong, "Journeys and Nostalgia in Catullus," in *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 109, No. 1 (October–November 2013), pp. 43–71.

⁵² For the implications of his work in view of contemporary republican history, see D. Braund, "The Politics of Catullus 10: Memmius, Caesar, and the Bithynians," in *Hermathena*, No. 160 (Summer 1996), pp. 45–57. On the particular matter of the relationship of the work of Catullus and his peers to the rise of Caesar, see J. W. Spaeth, Jr., "Caesar's Friends and Enemies among the Poets," in *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 32, No. 9 (Jun., 1937), pp. 541–56, and H. W. Benario, "Caesar, Propaganda, and the Poets," in *The Classical Weekly*, Vol. 50, No. 2, Caesar (Oct. 19, 1956), pp. 22–4.

⁵³ See further here P. Somfai, "Commune sepulcrum: The 'Catullan' Memory of Troy in Vergil's *Aeneid*," in *Acta Classica Universitatis Scientiarum Debreceniensis* 55 (2019), pp. 247–60.

the problems posed by the arrival of the Trojans in Latium. For Augustan Virgil, the solution to any discomfort or awkwardness occasioned by Rome's Trojan roots is explained by the agreement reached by Jupiter and Juno that Rome will be Italian in *sermo* and *mores*, not Trojan, and that the Trojan element will be a corporal one only⁵⁴. It is an elegant solution, one that directly explores a real difficulty, and that offers an answer that is more or less satisfactory. One of the more problematic aspects of the whole matter is the question of the Julian, Trojan descent from Venus through Aeneas-Iulus; Virgil's approach responds both to certain realities of Roman cultural and social *mores*, as well as to the place of the assassinated and deified Caesar in the nascent Augustan Age. It has been noted that one character in Virgil's epic who would not be pleased with the terms of the Junonian reconciliation is the conspicuously absent Venus, for whom the renewal and restoration of Troy is tied inextricably to her concern for her son Aeneas⁵⁵. Certainly she might be expected to have raised objections to the settlement terms; Troy emerges as the decidedly junior partner in the emerging Roman polity, an outcome at variance with the wishes of the goddess with respect to the city she is inclined to favor.

Catullus was a likely, if not the principal poetic source for any pessimistic appraisal of Troy in Virgil. Apart this intertextual influence, Catullus' recurring meditations on Troy and Phrygia offer an implicit, disturbing comment on late republican Roman imperialism. The Romans of Catullus' day had ventured far and wide in the Mediterranean, not least to the very region whence Aeneas and his followers had departed on their way to a new home in Latium. That place of origin in the Troad is associated with frenzy and passion, whether the source is the *Dindymi domina* or the disastrous affair of Paris and Helen; Troy is the common grave for two continents, and the locus for an ecstatic religious cult known for feverish devotion and, most notoriously, the self-mutilation of the Galli. Those who choose not to venture to such locales, however, may well fall prey all the same to intensely obsessive passion and amatory fury; whether the subject is Greek Acme and her desire for ever more intense flames to consume Roman Septimius' and her own marrow, or Caecilius' *puella* who was so enraptured by his Cybele poem, the lure of lust and the snares of erotic entanglement exist in Italy no less than in the hinterlands of Roman rule. Perils enough abound at home; travel to a virtual epicenter of rabidity and fury portends even greater risk. And to the extent that the Caesar of Catullus' day already was highlighting his descent from Iulus, for the lyric poet the concern may not have been whether Caesar was white or black, but the notion that he was Trojan.

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⁵⁴ Cf. *Aeneid* 12.791–842.

⁵⁵ On this topic see L. Fratantuono, "Why Does Virgil's Victorious Venus Vanish?," forthcoming in *Hermathena*.

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