

Bona Dea Scandal Echoes in Catullus 63

Catullus, who arguably knew Clodius Pulcher's sister Clodia Metelli (Goold, 1987), likely completed Poem 63 in the early 50s BCE (Bremmer, 2005). My paper will argue that based on textual evidence, Catullus was directly familiar with the Bona Dea scandal and trial ("BDS&T"), and that he deliberately evoked auditory and many other BDS&T recollections in Poem 63. My paper will offer multiple further parallels. I will also offer suggestions (not all of them mutually exclusive) as to why Catullus might have done this. For this abstract, I offer two examples of the BDS&T evocations found in Poem 63, followed by relevant textual and archeological background material.

Poem 63 starts with Attis, a privileged male (Bremmer, 2005), emasculating himself. With associates, Attis then carries a musical instrument while visiting the house in "PHRYGIA" of the Great Mother goddess, Cybele (restricted to women and eunuchs).

In December 62, Clodius Pulcher, in female costume carrying a musical instrument and abetted at least by a maidservant of Pompeia, wife of Rome's highest pontiff (Julius Caesar), infiltrated the women-only Bona Dea rites conducted by the Vestals, seemingly to romance Pompeia in the "REGIA" (Caesar's house), whose sound perhaps echoes the sound of "Phrygia". (Cic., Ad Att, 1.13.3; 1,16.3; De Harusp., 21.44. Plut., Cic., 28.2. Dio Cass., 37.45).

Cybele orders the leftmost lion of two roaring lions to pursue and madden Attis. A scholium (Coarelli, 1999) mentions two lion statues, and other ancient sources refer to a quadriga that may have existed then on an old altar in the forum strongly associated with Romulus (Bartels, 2009: 28, n. 11). Excavations show that just left of where the leftmost lion possibly stood, in the 80s BCE, Sulla's forum re-pavers apparently buried and made a distinctive memorial over a previously long visible and doubtless venerated cippus that bore an archaic,

possibly pre-Republican Latin text. The Romulus shrine was near the formerly water-filled ancient Lacus Curtius cavity, and also the Comitium, where trials often took place (Richardson, 1992; Stambaugh, 1988).

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