

PHRYGIAN EUNUCHS AND ROMAN VIRTUS:
THE CULT OF THE MATER MAGNA
AND THE TROJAN ORIGINS OF ROME IN VIRGIL'S *AENEID*

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Asia Minor was present in the City of Rome at its very centre: on the Palatine, next to the house of Augustus and close to many spots connected with the foundation of the city, was the temple of the Mater Deum Magna Idaea, who had been brought from Phrygia to Rome in 204 BC¹. Her worship was associated on the one hand with the respectable Roman *ludi Megale(n)ses* (or *Megale(n)sia*), on the other hand with the orgiastic rites of her priests, who were Phrygian eunuchs. The goddess' home could be situated more specifically in the Troad (as *Idaea* indicates), and that implied that she shared her origins with Aeneas, the founder of the Roman people. Thus the 'Oriental' elements in her cult might reinforce an 'Orientalist' reading of the Trojan origins of Rome. In an article on Catullus 63 I have briefly suggested that the connection between the Trojan origins of Rome and the cult of the Mater Magna was used by Virgil for a meditation on Roman national identity². In the present paper I intend to develop that suggestion a little further, without, however, aspiring at offering more than a first exploration of a large and complicated subject.

The Mater Magna came to Rome from Phrygia, but it is not always clear from which Phrygia³. The fullest account we have, that of Livy, reports that,

¹ On the cult of the Mater Magna, the comprehensive work of H. GRAILLOT, *Le culte de Cybèle Mère des Dieux à Rome et dans l'empire romain* (Paris 1912) is still valuable, as is the survey by M.J. VERMASEREN, *Cybele and Attis. The Myth and the Cult* (London 1977). Ph. BORGEAUD, *La Mère des dieux. De Cybèle à la Vierge Marie* (Paris 1996) studies the Roman goddess in a wider framework, as does L.E. ROLLER, *In Search of God the Mother. The Cult of Anatolian Cybele* (Berkeley, etc., 1999). A brief modern treatment in M. BEARD - J. NORTH - S. PRICE, *Religions of Rome* (2 vols., Cambridge 1998), 1.96-98, 164-166 (with translated sources in vol. 2). On 'Mater Magna' rather than 'Magna Mater' see K. ZIEGLER, 'Mater Magna oder Magna Mater?', in: J. BIBAUW (ed.), *Hommages à Marcel Renard* (3 vols., Brussels 1969), 2.845-855.

² R.R. NAUTA, 'Catullus 63 in a Roman context', in: R.R. NAUTA - A. HARDER (eds.), *Catullus' Poem on Attis. Text and Contexts* (Leiden 2005), 87-119, at 111-113 (= *Mnemosyne* 57 (2004), 596-628, at 620-622).

³ The most important recent discussions are E. GRUEN, *Studies in Greek Culture and Roman Policy* (Berkeley, etc. 1990), 5-33; BORGEAUD, *Mère* (n. 1), 89-130; ROLLER, *God the Mother* (n. 1), 263-285; and A. ERSKINE, *Troy between Greece and Rome. Local Tradition and Imperial Power* (Oxford 2001), 205-224. On the two Phrygias see also the contribution of Ph. Hardie to this volume.

through the intermediary of King Attalus I of Pergamum, the cultic image of the goddess was transferred to Rome from Pessinus in Central Phrygia, and all other sources concur (though sometimes omitting Pergamum), with the exception of Varro, who mentions Pergamum only, and Ovid, in whose story the goddess is fetched, again with the assistance of Attalus, from Mt. Ida in the other Phrygia, the Troad⁴. Scholars often privilege Ovid's story, precisely because it introduces the Trojan component, but they then have to explain how the other versions came about. Varro, who derives the name *Megalesia* from *Megalesion*, the name of the temple of the Great Mother at Pergamum, 'whence she was brought to Rome', may merely indulge in etymological conjecture, and in any case the goddess is shipped from Pergamum in the other versions as well⁵. For the story of Pessinuntine origin an annalistic source is suggested, to be dated to the second or early first century, when Pessinus had become an important shrine, and regularly came into contact with Rome⁶. However, on this assumption the new story must not only have ousted an original story of Trojan origins (which would imply that at least at the time of the unknown annalist the connection with Troy was no longer highly prized), it must also have influenced the propaganda of the Pessinuntine shrine itself, which according to Strabo, 'the Romans had made famous by taking thence an ἀφίδρυμα [i.e. something with which to found their own cult] of the goddess'⁷. On the other hand, even in Livy's version, and even in his report of the oracle that urged the Romans to summon the goddess from Pessinus, she is called *Mater Idaea*, and that name unequivocally links her with Mt Ida⁸. However, this may still be reconciled with the Pessinuntine version, if, as Erskine has recently argued, the epithet *Idaea* was added to the nomenclature of the goddess not to refer to her

⁴ Liv. 29.10.4-11.8, 14.5-14; Var. L. 6.15; Ov. F. 4.249-276. Further sources are listed in GRUEN, *Studies* (n. 3), 206, n. 33. It is sometimes stated that also Herodian derives the goddess from the Troad (thus ROLLER, *God the Mother* (n. 1), 269), but although the Roman envoys in his account obtain the goddess by adducing συγγένειαν and recounting τὴν ἀπ' Αἰνείου τοῦ Φρυγῶς ἐξ αὐτοῦς διαδοχὴν (1.11.3), this happens in Pessinus.

⁵ Var. L. 6.15 *Megalesia dicta a Graecis, quod ex Libris Sibyllinis arcessita ab Attalo rege Pergama; ibi prope murum Megalesion, id est templum eius deae, unde aduecta Romam*. 'Etymological conjecture': GRUEN, *Studies* (n. 3), 17.

⁶ Thus GRUEN, *Studies* (n. 3), 19; similarly ROLLER, *God the Mother* (n. 1), 269. Elaborate speculation about annalistic sources in H. BERNEDER, *Magna Mater-Kult und Sibyllinen. Kultransfer und annalistische Geschichtsfiktion* (Innsbruck 2004).

⁷ Str. 12.5.3; on the meaning of ἀφίδρυμα see RADT *ad* Str. 4.1.4.

⁸ Liv. 29.10.5, in reporting the contents of the Sibylline oracle: *quandoque bostis alienigena terrae Italiae bellum intulisset, eum pelli Italia uincique posse, si Mater Idaea e Pessinunte Roman aduecta foret*; the name *Mater Idaea* is often used elsewhere in Livy, likewise in one breath with Pessinus at 34.3.8 and 35.10.9. Before the Augustan period, *Mater Idaea* is to be found in Lucretius (2.611, quoted below) and frequently in Cicero (see n. 13).

place of origin, but to evoke certain associations with the Troad⁹. These associations, he further suggests, were important to King Attalus, who in his diplomatic dealings with Rome stressed the shared Trojan ancestry, but they played no role at Rome itself¹⁰. Against this, it has often been held that the Mater Magna would not have received a temple on the Palatine, in an area full of associations with the foundation of the city, if she had not herself been associated with that foundation as well¹¹. But the location of the temple may perhaps be explained differently, from its vicinity to the temple of Victory, where the goddess had been provisionally placed in 204, doubtless to underscore the expectation that she would bring about the final victory over Hannibal¹². So it seems doubtful, although possible, that when the Mater Magna was introduced to Rome, she was associated in the minds of the Romans with the myth of the city's Trojan origins.

Whatever may have been the case in the earliest period, in the Late Republic the association is absent from the literary record, with the possible exception of Catullus 63, which I will leave out for the moment, because it is not *explicitly* about Rome. Three authors are relevant: Cicero, Varro, and Lucretius. In Cicero, the Mater Magna is frequently mentioned, but never associated with Troy¹³. In *De Haruspicum Responso* there is a long passage (22-29), where, although Cicero calls the goddess *Mater Idaea* (22), he mentions Pessinus as her 'seat and home' (28), and asserts that her cult had been brought 'from the ends of the earth' (24); this fits inland Pessinus better than Troy, which in any case is not mentioned¹⁴. In this passage Cicero is intent on amplifying the religious, moral and political importance of the Megalesia for the City of Rome, and he could hardly have failed to bring in Troy, if an association with Troy had been present in the collective consciousness of Romans of his day. Varro, who paid much attention to the Mater Magna, both in a satiric mode in his *Menippeae* and in a scholarly

⁹ Cf. ERSKINE, *Troy* (n. 3), 213-216.

¹⁰ Cf. ERSKINE, *Troy* (n. 3), 216-223; on Attalus also (with different emphasis) GRUEN, *Studies* (n. 3), 29-32.

¹¹ Thus S. WEINSTOCK in his review of Latte's *Römische Religionsgeschichte*, *JRS* 51 (1961), 206-215, at 213, accepted by GRUEN, *Studies* (n. 3), 19. It is also often held that foreign cults were excluded from the *pomerium*, and that the Mater Magna cannot for that reason have been regarded as a foreign deity; but see ERSKINE, *Troy* (n. 3), 203, with reference to A. ZIOLKOWSKI, *The Temples of Mid-Republican Rome and their Historical and Topographical Context* (Rome 1992), 268-283, esp. 275-279.

¹² See Liv. 29.14.13. Her own temple was dedicated only in 191: Liv. 36.36.3-4.

¹³ Cic. *Ver.* 4.97, 5.186, *Har.* 22-29, *Sest.* 56, *Leg.* 2.22, 40, *Sen.* 45. She is called *Mater Idaea* in *Leg.* (and cf. *Fin.* 5.64: *sacra Idaea*), *Mater Magna* in *Sest.* and *Sen.*, both in *Ver.* and *Har.*

¹⁴ *Har.* 28 *Pessinuntem ipsum, sedem domiciliumque Matris deorum; 24 ex ultimis terris (27 ex Phrygia)*. It must be noted, however, that the affair of Brogitarus, to which Cicero alludes at *Har.* 28 (cf. *Dom.* 129, *Sest.* 56), had made Pessinus a topic of current interest.

mode in his *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum*, never mentions Troy – at least in the fragments of his work that have been preserved¹⁵. Lucretius, in his famous passage on the Mater Magna, explains why she has Phrygian *comites*:

*hanc uariae gentes antiquo more sacrorum
Idaeam uocitant Matrem Phrygiasque cateruas
dant comites, quia primum ex illis finibus edunt
per terrarum orbis fruges coepisse creari.* (Lucretius 2.610-613)

She it is whom different nations in their ancient ritual acclaim as the Idaean Mother, and give her troops of Phrygians to escort her, because men declare that first from that realm came the corn, which then spread over the round world. (tr. Rouse-Smith, Loeb-edn.)

The theory that agriculture first spread from Phrygia is not attested elsewhere, and seems to have been invented for the sake of the paronomasia *Phryges ~ fruges* (a Latin pun, which cannot be derived from Greek), which apparently was more important to Lucretius than any Trojan connection¹⁶.

In Virgil's *Aeneid* the picture changes. For Virgil the Phrygian Mater Magna is emphatically a Trojan goddess. The use of 'Phrygian' for 'Trojan', pioneered by the Greek tragedians, was current in Roman tragedy as well, and is also found in Lucretius and Catullus¹⁷, but only in Virgil does it become constitutive for the identity of the Mater Magna. Her role throughout the *Aeneid* is to support her fellow-Trojan Aeneas. The passages in which she appears as doing so have often been discussed, and I shall limit myself to two episodes¹⁸. The first, to which I shall return at the end of my article, concerns Aeneas' ships, which are not only decorated with emblems of the

¹⁵ *Menippeae: Eumenides* 132-143 Cèbe = 119-121, 130-133, 140, 149-151, 155 B.; *Cygnus* 79 C. = B.; ὄνομα λῦρα 358 C. = 364 B.; perhaps *Testamentum* 540 C. = B. *Ant. rer. diu.*: fr. 267-269 Cardauns.

¹⁶ For the pun see D.A. WEST, *The Imagery and Poetry of Lucretius* (Edinburgh 1969), 106 (and note that *fruges* was actually a spelling of *Phryges*). Commentators compare the story in Herodotus 2.2, in which the Egyptian king Psammetichus believes he has discovered that the Phrygians are the oldest people, because the first word uttered by two children who were raised without ever being spoken to was *bekos*, the Phrygian for 'bread' – but this is not quite the same.

¹⁷ For Greek tragedy see E. HALL, *Inventing the Barbarian. Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy* (Oxford 1989), 38-39; ERSKINE, *Troy* (n. 3), 73-75, 256-257. Roman tragedy: Enn. 312, 334 J.; Pacuv. 205 R.²; Acc. 177, 489, 560, 665 R.²; inc. 7 R.²; paratragic: Pl. *Bacch.* 955. Lucretius: 1.474. Catullus: 61.18-19, 64.344 (and cf. poem 63). In Virgil himself already in *G.* 4.41 (*Phrygiae ... Idae*).

¹⁸ Further relevant passages include 2.788 (Creusa has been whisked away by the *magna deum genetrix*); 6.783-787 (Anchises compares Rome to the *Berecynthia Mater*); 7.137 (Aeneas prays to i.a. *Phrygiam ... Matrem*). The role of the Mater Magna in the *Aeneid* is discussed i.a. by T.P. WISEMAN, 'Cybele, Virgil and Augustus', in: T. WOODMAN - D. WEST (eds.), *Poetry and Politics in the Age of Augustus* (Cambridge 1984), 117-128; R.M. WILHELM, 'Cybele: the Great Mother of Augustan order', *Vergilius* 34 (1988), 77-101; I. BECHER, 'Der Kult der Magna Mater in augusteischer Zeit', *Klio* 73 (1991), 157-170, at 168-169; ROLLER, *God the Mother* (n. 1), 299-304.

Mater Magna, but have also been built from the wood of her sacred pines on Mt Ida: when these ships are attacked by the Italians, Jupiter changes them into sea-nymphs, who then inform Aeneas about the dangers threatening him; Aeneas responds with a prayer in which he asks the *alma parens Idaea deum* – a poetical version of the cult title *Mater Deum Magna Idaea* – to protect her ‘Phrygians’¹⁹.

The second episode is the one in Book 3 where Apollo instructs the Trojans in oracular fashion that they should settle in their country of origin:

*Dardanidae duri, quae uos a stirpe parentum
prima tulit tellus, eadem uos ubere laeto
accipiet reduces. antiquam exquirite matrem.* (Verg. *Aen.* 3.94-96)

O much-enduring sons of Dardanus, the land which first bore you from your parents’ stock will be the land that will take you back to her rich breast. Seek out your ancient mother. (tr. West)²⁰

Aeneas’ father Anchises interprets this wrongly as a reference to Crete, whence came, he alleges, ‘the Mother who dwells on Mt Cybelus’ – an allusion to the *Mater*’s mythological name *Cybele* –, ‘the bronze cymbals of the Corybantes’ – mythological servants of Cybele – ‘and the grove of Ida’ (111-112 *hinc Mater cultrix Cybeli Corybantiaque aera / Idaeumque nemus*). He thus explains the syncretism between Cybele, attended by Corybants on Mt Ida in the Troad, and Rhea, attended by Curetes on another Mt Ida in Crete, but he also suggests that the cult of the *Mater* is bound up with the land of origin of the Trojans, which is also called *mater*²¹. Anchises’ error in identifying this land as Crete is soon corrected by the Penates, who appear to Aeneas in a dream, and tell him he has to go to Italy, whence his ancestor Dardanus had migrated:

*hae nobis propriae sedes, hinc Dardanus ortus
Iasiusque pater, genus a quo principe nostrum.* (167-168)

This is our true home. This is where Dardanus sprang from and father Iasius, from whom our race took its beginning. (tr. West, modified)

¹⁹ *Aen.* 9.80-122, 10.219-255. For the decoration of the ships see 10.156-158 (Mt Ida and the Mother’s lions).

²⁰ Unless otherwise noted, translations of longer passages from the *Aeneid* are taken (sometimes with slight modifications) from D.A. WEST, *Virgil. The Aeneid. A New Prose Translation* (Harmondsworth 1990).

²¹ The connection is brought out by Ovid, who in his version of the oracle instructing the Romans to fetch the *Mater* from Asia echoes Apollo’s words in Virgil: *mater abest: matrem iubeo, Romane, requiras* (*F.* 4.259). For the syncretism see HORSFALL *ad loc.*

It is difficult to explain why it is Iasius rather than his brother Dardanus to whom the attribute *pater* is attached and who is called *princeps* of *genus nostrum*, but his prominence in the present context must be related to the tradition that he was the father of the Corybants, who have just been mentioned in Anchises' mistaken interpretation of the oracle²². According to another variant, reported by Diodorus Siculus, Iasion (as Iasius was also called) married Cybele and begot Corybas, who after Iasion's death migrated, together with Cybele and Dardanus, to the Troad, where they instituted the cult of the Great Mother and Corybas named the ecstatic participants in the rites 'Corybants' after himself²³. Virgil has Dardanus and Iasius originate from Italy, but Dardanus' stay on Samothrace, presumably on the journey from Italy to the Troad, is explicitly mentioned in Book 7²⁴. All in all, it seems not unlikely that Virgil's readers were familiar with stories such as the one reproduced by Diodorus, and that the name of Iasius is meant to evoke these stories. If that is indeed the case, Virgil's readers would recognise that the Penates correct not only Anchises' version of the origin of the Trojans – and hence ultimately the Romans –, but also his version of the origin of the cult of the Mater Magna.

The prominence of the Mater Magna and her association with Troy in the *Aeneid* have generally been explained from the new role the goddess acquired under Augustus²⁵. In this context, T. P. Wiseman has pointed to the topography of Rome: Augustus had built his house on the Palatine, next to the temple of the Mater Magna, and although he had not chosen the spot for that reason – rather, he was moved by the vicinity of the temple of Victory and by the various associations of the Palatine with Romulus – he had to incorporate the goddess into his self-representation, and to this need, it is

²² For the problems of the passage cf. HORSFALL *ad loc.*, but without reference to the Corybants. That Iasius was their father is noted by DServ. *ad* 3.111. In view of the opposition between *nos* and *tu* in the speech of the Penates (154-157), one would expect that at 167-168 as well *nobis* and *nostrum* would refer to them (rather than to the Trojan people, as it is generally taken). Could they possibly be referring in some way to the tradition that Iasius inaugurated the mysteries of the Great Gods (see n. 23), with whom they had been identified by Cassius Hemina and Varro (DServ. *ad Aen.* 1.378, Serv. and DServ. *ad Aen.* 3.12, etc.)?

²³ D.S. 5.49.2-3 (= FG^rH 548 F1). According to the story in Diodorus, Iasion was the first to practice the Samothracian mysteries (5.48.4), whereas the cult of the Great Mother was introduced by his mother Electra (5.49.1), but the tradition about the transfer from Samothrace to the Troad is of course dependent on a perceived similarity between the two cults. In D.H. 1.61.3-4 it is Idaeus (~ Ida), son of Dardanus, who after the death of Iasus (as he is there called) brings the cult of Mother of the Gods from Samothrace to the Troad.

²⁴ *Aen.* 7.206-208 *his ortus ut agris / Dardanus Idaeas penetrarit ad urbes / Threiciamque Samum, quae nunc Samothracia fertur*; cf. HORSFALL *ad loc.*

²⁵ See esp. F. BÖMER, 'Kybele in Rom. Die Geschichte ihres Kults als politisches Phänomen', *MDAI(R)* 71 (1964), 130-151, at 138-144; WISEMAN, 'Cybele' (n. 18); WILHELM, 'Cybele' (n. 18).

proposed, Virgil responded. Although I do not wish to contest this explanation, I do wish to suggest that there are further resonances to the treatment of the Mater Magna in the *Aeneid*. To bring these out, it is necessary to look first at those passages where she and her cult are viewed unfavourably.

Like the positive passages, the negative ones have often been discussed²⁶, and I shall do no more than mention that both Iarbas in Book 4 and Turnus in Book 12 characterise their enemy Aeneas as a Phrygian eunuch (*semiuir*), i.e. a *gallus*, a castrated devotee of the Mater Magna²⁷. But I shall briefly dwell on the famous speech of Numanus Remulus in Book 9, in which he contrasts the life of the sturdy Italian peasant-farmers with that of the Trojans, whom he represents as decadent (590-620)²⁸. The speaker has an almost excessively proto-Roman name, recalling King Numa as well as both Romulus and Remus, and his praise of Italian country life is likewise excessive. Moreover, his disparagement of the Trojans is immediately refuted by Ascanius, Aeneas' son, who responds to his speech by killing him with an arrow, thus demonstrating that it is not only the Italian boys for whom the hunt is a preparation for war²⁹. Yet even though Numanus' words are in this way 'corrected', they still demand to be taken seriously. To a certain extent, they are corroborated in the scene of reconciliation between Jupiter and Juno in Book 12, where Jupiter grants that the Italians may keep their dress, their language and their *mores*, and promises that the Trojans will contribute no more than their blood to the new race, which will be powerful through Italian *uirtus* (820-840). It is therefore significant that Numanus ends his speech by denying that the Trojans are men, *uiri*:

*uobis picta croco et fulgenti murice uestis,
desidia cordi, iuuat indulgere choreis,
et tunicae manicas et habent redimicula mitrae.
o uere Phrygiae, neque enim Phryges, ite per alta
Dindyma, ubi adsuetis biformem dat tibia cantum.*

²⁶ References as in n. 18.

²⁷ *Aen.* 4.215-217 (Iarbas) *et nunc ille Paris cum semiuiro comitatu, / Maeonia mentum mitra crinemque madentem / subnexus, raptu potitur*; 12.97-100 (Turnus) *da sternere corpus / loricaeque manu ualida lacerare reuulsam / semiuiri Phrygis et foedare in puluere crinis / uibratos calido ferro murrage madentis*. Cf. NAUTA, 'Catullus 63' (n. 2), 112 (= 621). A full review would also have to include the Trojan Chloereus, a former priest of Cybele, described by the narrator (not by a hostile character) at 11.768-777; cf. HORSFALL *ad loc.*

²⁸ On this speech see N.M. HORSFALL, 'Numanus Remulus: ethnography and propaganda in *Aeneid* 9. 598 ff.' (1971), reprinted in: S.J. HARRISON (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Vergil's Aeneid* (Oxford 1990), 305-315; M. DICKIE, 'The speech of Numanus Remulus (*Aeneid* 9,598-620)', *PLLS* 5 (1985), 165-221; and HARDIE *ad* 598-620 (p. 188).

²⁹ On the significance of Ascanius' bow-shot see HARDIE *ad* 590-663 (pp. 185-186) and 621-671 (pp. 198-199).

*tympana uos buxusque uocat Berecynthia Matris
Idaetae; sinite arma uiris et cedite ferro.* (Verg. *Aen.* 9.614-620)

But you like your clothes dyed with yellow saffron and the bright juice of the purple fish. Your delight is in dancing and idleness. You have sleeves to your tunics and ribbons to keep your bonnets on. You are Phrygian women, not Phrygian men! Away with you over the heights of Mount Dindymon, where you can hear your favourite tunes on the double pipe. The tambourines are calling you and the box-wood fifes of the Berecynthia Mother of Mount Ida. Leave weapons to the men and renounce iron. (tr. West, modified)

The verses 617-618 unmistakably evoke Catullus 63:

*agite ite ad alta, Gallae, Cybeles nemora simul,
simul ite, Dindymenae dominae uaga pecora* (Catul. 63.11-12)

Come, go together, Gallae, to the lofty groves of Cybele, go together, wandering herds of the lady of Dindymon. (tr. Harrison)³⁰

Until now, I have left Catullus' poem out of account, because it is not, on the face of it, about Rome at all. It is about a Greek boy, called Attis, who has abandoned the life of an *eromenos* in the palaestra and the gymnasium, and has sailed to the wilderness of Phrygia, where in ecstatic devotion to Cybele he unmans himself and, in spite of regrets, becomes a servant of the goddess for the rest of his days. Phrygia here is clearly the Troad – Mt Ida is much to the fore –, and I have formerly argued that this may have had a special resonance for Roman readers³¹. But in the present paper I have attempted to demonstrate that the connection between the cult of the Mater Magna and the Trojan origins of Rome was not 'activated', although it was in principle available, before Virgil, and I now wish to suggest that it was actually Virgil who brought out the Roman significance of the text. Catullus 63 may have challenged him to employ the cult of the Mater Magna to discuss an ambivalence in Roman national identity. The Romans were very much preoccupied by the dangers of moral corruption, which they conceived of as alien to their own nature, and projected on what was other, both in terms of ethnicity and gender: Roman *uirtus* was seen to be undermined by foreign, and especially Oriental, effeminacy. What Virgil does, and reads Catullus as doing, is to locate this Oriental effeminacy at the very place of origin of the Romans.

But Catullus' poem may also have inspired Virgil to develop a vision of

³⁰ Translations of passages from Catullus 63 are taken from the translation by S. HARRISON in NAUTA - HARDER (eds.), *Catullus' Poem on Attis* (n. 2).

³¹ See n. 2.

history in which the danger of moral corruption might be overcome. That poem is about a young man who cannot or will not make the transition, sexually and socially, to adult male life. This is symbolised by his self-castration and expressed by the feminine linguistic forms used to refer to him. Numanus Remulus also uses these feminine forms (*uere Phrygiae, neque enim Phryges*), implying that the Romans have refused to become real men. But his speech is framed by the transition of a Trojan boy, and one might say *the* Trojan boy, Ascanius / Iulus, to manhood. Before the speech, Virgil announces that this was the first time that Ascanius had proved himself a warrior rather than a hunter (590-594), and afterwards Apollo congratulates him on his new-won manhood: *macte noua uirtute, puer. sic itur ad astra* (641)³². This suggests that there is also the possibility of successful transition, contrasted with the unsuccessful or abortive transition of Attis. And it suggests that the transition from Troy to Rome is parallel to that of boy to man.

From this perspective I should like to consider two further passages, both from Book 5, a book in which the continuity between Troy and Rome is a leading theme. The first passage is the ecphrasis of the splendid Greek cloak, embroidered with gold and purple, that Aeneas gives as a prize to the winner of the boat race, Cloanthus:

*ipsis praecipuos ductoribus addit honores:
uictori chlamydem auratam, quam plurima circum
purpura maeandro duplici Meliboea cucurrit,
intextusque puer frondosa regius Ida
uelocis iaculo ceruos cursuque fatigat
acer, anhelanti similis, quem praepes ab Ida
sublimem pedibus rapuit Iouis armiger uncis;
longaeui palmas nequiquam ad sidera tendunt
custodes, saeuitque canum latratus in auras.* (Verg. *Aen.* 5.249-257)

In addition the captains were singled out for special honours. The victor received a cloak embroidered with gold round which there ran a broad double meander of Meliboean purple, and woven into it was the royal prince running with his javelin and wearying the swift stags on the leafy slopes of Mount Ida. There he was, eager and breathless, so it seemed, and down from Ida plunged the bird that carries the thunderbolt of Jupiter and carried him off in its hooked talons high into the heavens while the old men who were there as his guards stretched their hands in vain towards the stars and the dogs barked furiously up into the air. (tr. West)

The rape of Ganymede is one of the causes of Juno's wrath that sets the

³² See HARDIE *ad* 590-591 and 641.

Aeneid in motion (1.27) and that determines the course of the poem, until she gives it up in the end, allowing the Trojans to become Romans; Cloanthus, as Virgil recalls at the beginning of the boat race, will be the ancestor of the Roman Cluentii (5.122-123)³³. So the ekphrasis reminds the reader of the entire sweep of the *Aeneid* and of Roman history beyond it. Moreover, Philip Hardie has brilliantly demonstrated that Ganymede's ascension to heaven foreshadows in various ways the apotheosis of Aeneas, that of Romulus (through allusion to Ennius), and hence that of Julius Caesar and the anticipated apotheosis of Augustus³⁴. Similarly, as Hardie also points out, Ganymede's journey from Mt Ida to the stars anticipates the trajectory of another *regius puer*, Ascanius / Iulus, who in the words of Apollo quoted above is figuratively raised to the stars at the moment of his transition from boy to man. That transition was connected with a transition from hunting to warfare, and it must be significant in this respect that Ganymede is depicted by Virgil not, as was usual, as a herdsman, but as a hunter³⁵. But there is a crucial difference between Ganymede and Ascanius in that the former does *not* make the transition from boy to man: even though being elevated to the gods, he remains locked for all eternity in the role of an *eromenos*. He may remind the reader of another boy running breathlessly on Mt Ida, Catullus' Attis³⁶:

*uiridem citus adit Idam properante pede chorus.
furibunda simul anbelans uaga uadit, animam agens* (Catul. 63.30-31)

The swift troupe came to green Ida with speeding foot. Raving, panting the while, Attis went wandering, pumping her breath (tr. Harrison)

That boy's transition to manhood was likewise prevented by the interven-

³³ Here and elsewhere in Book 5, Virgil draws on Varro's and Hyginus' works *De familiis Troianis*; cf. Serv. *ad* 5.389 (Hyginus) and 5.704 (Varro). See PETER, *HRR*, 2.XXXIII, CVI, and for views on the historical context T.P. WISEMAN, 'Legendary genealogies in Late-Republican Rome', *A&R* 21 (1974), 153-164; P. TOOHEY, 'Politics, prejudice, and Trojan genealogies: Varro, Hyginus, and Horace', *Arethusa* 17 (1984), 5-28.

³⁴ See Ph. HARDIE, 'Another look at Virgil's Ganymede', in: T.P. WISEMAN (ed.), *Classics in Progress. Essays on Ancient Greece and Rome* (Oxford 2002), 333-361. Hardie reacted to a 'pessimistic' reading by M.C.J. PUTNAM, *Virgil's Epic Designs. Ekphrasis in the Aeneid* (New Haven - London 1998), 55-74, based on an earlier article, 'Ganymede and Virgilian ekphrasis', *AJPh* 116 (1995), 419-440. Hardie was criticised in turn by PUTNAM, 'Two ways of looking at the *Aeneid*', *CW* 96 (2002-2003), 177-184.

³⁵ Cf. F. BELLANDI, 'Ganimede, Ascanio e la gioventù Troiana', in: *Studi di filologia classica in onore di Giusto Monaco* (4 vols., Palermo s.a. [1991]), 2.919-930 (arguing that by making him a hunter, Virgil 'virilises' Ganymede); HARDIE, 'Ganymede' (n. 34), 338-339.

³⁶ Cf. PUTNAM, *Epic Designs* (n. 34), 60 for the verbal echo of *simul anbelans* in *anbelanti similis*, and 65-66 for his interpretation.

tion of an imperious deity. If we read the cloak this way, we are bound to realise that it still belongs to the Trojan past³⁷.

Somewhat later in Book 5, the Trojan boys perform the equestrian exercise known as the *lusus Troiae*, the ‘Troy game’. They are led by Iulus, the son of Aeneas, by a young Priam, grandson of the Trojan king, and by Atys, who is presented as the ancestor of the Atii, the family of Augustus’ mother:

*alter Atys, genus unde Atii duxere Latini,
paruus Atys pueroque puer dilectus Iulo.* (Verg. *Aen.* 5.568-569)

The second squadron was led by Atys, the founder of the Atii of Latium. Young Atys was a dear friend of the boy Iulus. (tr. West)

The connection of the Atii with a mythical Atys may derive from the *De familiis Troianis* of Varro or Hyginus, laid to contribution by Virgil elsewhere in Book 5³⁸, and an Atys appears in Livy’s list of the kings of Alba Longa (1.3.8), but the name is also suggestive of *Attis*, the name of the mythical consort of Cybele as well as of Catullus’ human servant of that goddess³⁹. Although *Atys* is a Lydian, not a Phrygian name, the well-known story of Atys, the son of the Lydian king Croesus, got mixed up with that of Phrygian Attis, and in one of the epigrams of the Greek Anthology a *gallus* (traveling from Phrygia to Lydia) is called *Atys*⁴⁰.

A further association with Attis has recently been detected in the golden torques (or twisted necklaces) that the boys are described as wearing:

*it pectore summo
flexilis obtorti per collum circulus auri.* (558-559)

with circlets of twisted gold round neck and chest. (tr. West)

The American archaeologist Brian Rose has argued that the golden torques evoked the apparel of the *galli*, the priests of the Mater Magna, as well as the

³⁷ This is also suggested by its being a non-Roman garment (a *chlamys*), displaying ‘oriental’ luxury in its gold and purple; cf. PUTNAM, *Epic Designs* (n. 34), 222, n. 14; and HARDIE, ‘Ganymede’ (n. 34), 353-355, for a more positive view.

³⁸ See above, n. 33.

³⁹ The association of Atys with Attis is also posited by PUTNAM, *Epic Designs* (n. 34), 66 (who in n. 16 credits Raymond Marks).

⁴⁰ *AP* 6.220.3 = 1541 *HE*. In fact ἄτυς stems from the corrector C, whereas the first hand in the codex has ἄτις. Although in Phrygia spellings with a single consonant were current (but in the form *Ates*: see J.N. BREMMER, ‘Attis: A Greek god in Anatolian Pessinous and Catullan Rome’, in: NAUTA - HARDER (eds.), *Catullus’ Poem on Attis* (n. 2), 25-64 (= *Mnemosyne* 57, 534-573), at 44 (= 553)), ἄτις looks like an error influenced by ἄτις, whereas ἄτυς fits the Lydian context (cf. also the headnote in GOW - PAGE). That the stories of Attis and Atys got mixed up appears from Hermesian. fr. 8 P. (or so it seems to me, but cf. BREMMER, 27-30 (= 536-539)).

iconography of Attis himself⁴¹. He shares the general consensus that Virgil describes the game as it was performed in his own time, but I think that golden torques cannot then have been worn. We have a notice in Suetonius that when Nonius Asprenas was wounded in the *lusus Troiae*, he was awarded a golden torque by Augustus and gained the right to assume the hereditary cognomen *Torquatus*⁴². Now if golden torques were a regular feature of the boys' costume, this would surely not have been a meaningful gift. If we identify Suetonius' Nonius Asprenas with the first known bearer of that name who carried the cognomen *Torquatus* (as seems reasonable), the episode is to be dated to after Virgil's death⁴³, and it is just conceivable that Augustus' gift was made in acknowledgment of the *Aeneid*. Golden torques, however, were regularly awarded as military decorations to honour extraordinary valour, and this may perhaps suffice as a background to Augustus' gesture⁴⁴.

But even if Roman boys did not wear golden torques when performing the *lusus Troiae*, the Trojan boys in the *Aeneid* did, and the question remains whether this evoked the *galli* and Attis himself. Although one of the most widely reproduced pictures of a *gallus* does indeed show a torque, this representation is not only late, but also highly exceptional⁴⁵. Likewise there are virtually no depictions of Attis with a torque, and the one that Rose adduces, a bust embossed on a silver bowl from the famous Hildesheim treasure, has a crescent moon fastened to the shoulders and a starry cap, which puts it beyond doubt that the deity represented is not Attis, but the moon-god Men⁴⁶. So the torques of the Trojan boys in *Aeneid* 5 did not evoke the

⁴¹ See C.B. ROSE, 'Bilingual Trojan iconography', in: R. ASLAN et al. (eds.), *Mauerschau. Festschrift für Manfred Korfmann* (Remshalden - Grunbach 2002), 1.329-350, at 334-337; also 'The Parthians in Augustan Rome', *AJA* 109 (2005), 21-75, at 43, n. 117; cf. 48.

⁴² Suet. *Aug.* 43.2 *sed et Troiae lusum edidit frequentissime maiorum minorumque puerorum, prisci decorique moris existimans clavae stirpis indolem sic notescere. in hoc ludicro Nonium Asprenatem lapsu debilitatum aureo torque donavit passusque est ipsum posterosque Torquati ferre cognomen.*

⁴³ This Nonius Asprenas Torquatus (*PIR*² N 126) was the son of L. Nonius Asprenas *suff.* 6 AD (N 118). Even if the father's consulate came late, the son cannot have been old enough to participate in the game during Virgil's lifetime. W. ECK identifies the father with the *suff.* 29 AD (see W. ECK - A. CABALLOS - F. FERNÁNDEZ, *Das senatus consultum de Cn. Pisone patre* (Munich 1996), 85-87), but without taking the passage in Suetonius into account.

⁴⁴ See J. LINDERSKI, 'The silver and gold of valor: the award of *armillae* and *torques*', *Latomus* 60 (2001), 3-15 (10 on the passage in Suet.).

⁴⁵ The iconographical material has been collected in the seven volumes of M.J. VERMASEREN, *Corpus Cultus Cybelae Attidisque* (Leiden 1977-1989) (= *CCCA*), of which vol. 3 covers Latium. Rose's picture is *CCCA* 3, nr. 250, from the third century; it is also reproduced i.a. on the cover of vol. 2 of BEARD - NORTH - PRICE, *Religions of Rome* (n. 1). The only parallel I have been able to find in *CCCA* 3 (or in *LIMC*), and the only parallel mentioned by Rose ('Iconography' (n. 41), 334, n. 28; 'Parthians' (n. 41), 48, n. 155) is nr. 466, dated by Vermaseren to the middle of the second century.

⁴⁶ In the publication of the treasure by E. PERNICE - F. WINTER, *Der Hildesheimer Silberfund* (Berlin 1901), 26-28, identification with Men was still considered, but rejected because the bowl forms

cult of the Mater Magna. Yet they did more than recall a military decoration (like the torque given by Augustus to Nonius Asprenas may have done), and must be regarded as Orientalising signs. Although associated also with the Gauls, torques were best known as the insignia of Eastern nobility, and in Horace they are worn by Parthian kings (C. 3.6.12)⁴⁷. So the torques should be put in the same category as Priam's *tiaras* (7.247), as a reminder of the Trojans' 'Oriental' past⁴⁸. But the *tiaras*, like the cloak with the Ganymede motif, is given away, whereas the torques are not discarded, at least not in the case of Ascanius.

In Book 10, Ascanius is again seen wearing a golden torque:

*ipse inter medios, Veneris iustissima cura,
Dardanius caput, ecce, puer detectus honestum,
qualis gemma micat fuluum quae diuidit aurum,
aut collo decus aut capiti, uel quale per artem
inclusum buxo aut Oricia terebintho
lucet ebur; fusos ceruix cui lactea crinis
accipit et molli subnectens circulus auro.* (Verg. *Aen.* 10.132-138)

He himself in their midst, Venus' most rightful concern, the Trojan boy, his comely head uncovered, glowed like a jewel set in tawny gold, an ornament for neck or head, or as ivory shines set skilfully in box-wood or Orician terebinth; his milky neck and the circlet enclaspng it with pliant gold receive his flowing hair. (tr. Harrison)

There is a slight problem of text and interpretation here, but it is likely that *circulus auro*, which echoes *circulus auri* from Book 5, points not to a headband, but to a torque⁴⁹. However that may be, it is striking as how softly effeminate Ascanius is here represented, and with what suggestions of exotic

a pair with a similar bowl depicting Cybele. However, because Men is also coupled with Cybele, this argument should not have carried great weight. Men is no longer mentioned in the subsequent literature on the Hildesheim treasure, and the identification with Attis is taken for granted in the iconographical literature on that god (e.g. *CCCA* 6, no. 65, or the article by M. J. VERMASEREN - M. DE BOER in *LIMC*, nr. 345). However, E. LANE, *Corpus Monumentorum Religionis Dei Menis* (4 vols., Leiden 1971-1978) (= *CMRDM*) at the last minute included the bowl in his corpus of the religion of Men (2.169; cf. 3.92-93), and hence it found its way to the article 'Men' by R. VOLKOMMER in *LIMC* (no. 6). I know of only one other example of Attis with a *torques* (*LIMC*, no. 361).

⁴⁷ The two children in 'barbarian' dress on the Ara Pacis also wear torques. If they represent Gaius and Lucius dressed as Trojans, then the passage from the *Aeneid* might have inspired the iconography, but it must be noted that the details differ considerably (and that at least the younger child is too young for the *lusus Troiae*). It is more likely that they are foreign princes raised at the court in Rome, as has been argued most recently by ROSE, 'Parthians' (n. 41), 38-44. In that case the torques in the *Aeneid* would indeed have been taken as connoting 'barbarian' royalty.

⁴⁸ Cf. A. BARCHIESI, 'Learned eyes: poets, viewers, image makers', in: K. GALINSKY (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus* (Cambridge 2005), 281-305, at 296.

⁴⁹ See HARRISON *ad* 138 (rejecting M's *subnectit*). For this passage I have used Harrison's translation.

luxury, as the object of an eroticised gaze (*ecce, puer*)⁵⁰. In Book 9, Apollo hailed Ascanius as a man, but he also forbade him to engage further in the war because yet a boy (9.656 *parce, puer, bello*); and in Book 12 Ascanius, still a boy, has to learn *uirtus* from Aeneas (12.435 *disce, puer, uirtutem ex me*)⁵¹. This may suggest that the final transition Ascanius has to make lies outside the *Aeneid*, in the space of history.

I should like to conclude this paper by devoting a few words to Ovid's description of the Megalesia in the *Fasti* (4.179-372). The text imitates not only Lucretius' description of the procession of the Mater Magna (2.600-660), but also Catullus 63, both in the section on the festive procession in Rome and in the aetiological story of the self-castration of Attis (in this case the mythological Attis)⁵². I have listed a few of the allusions in the table below.

Ov. *F.* 4.241-242, 341-342, 365-366

*'ab pereant' dicebat adhuc; onus inguinis aufert,
nullaque sunt subito signa relicta uiri.*

...

*exululant comites, furiosaque tibia flatur,
et feriunt molles taurea terga manus.*

...

*qui bibit inde, furit: procul hinc discedite, quis est
cura bonae mentis: qui bibit inde, furit.*

Cat. 63.5-6, 10-11, 92-93

*deuolsit ili acuto sibi pondera silice,
itaque ut relicta sensit sibi membra sine uiro,*

...

*quatiensque terga tauri teneris caua digitis
canere haec suis adortast tremebunda comitibus:*

(22 *tibicen*, 24 *ululatibus*, 28 *ululat*, etc.)

*procul a mea tuus sit furor omnis, era, domo:
alios age incitatos, alios age rabidos.*

But Ovid also imitates Virgil, from whom he takes over the explicit derivation of the cult of the Mater Magna from Troy⁵³. In Ovid, the ship on which the goddess is brought to Rome is constructed from the very same pine trees on Mt Ida that had provided the timber for Aeneas' ships in Virgil, and Ovid's Cybele is said to follow Aeneas to Latium (273-274, 251-254). With this I may return to the beginning of my paper, because it demonstrates that Ovid cannot be used as testimony to an older and more authentic tradition in which the Mater Magna came from Mt Ida rather than from Pessinus⁵⁴. The role of the Troad in Ovid derives entirely from Virgil. And by combining imitation of Virgil with imitation of Catullus, Ovid acknowledges Virgil's move in recuperating Catullus' poem for a discourse about national identity.

⁵⁰ Cf. BARCHIESI, 'Learned eyes' (n. 48), 302.

⁵¹ Cf. HARDIE *ad* 9.656.

⁵² Ovid's imitation of Catullus (and Lucretius) is discussed by L. LANDOLFI, 'Attis "rescriptus"?' *Su Ov. Fast.* 4, 179-246', *Pan* 18-19 (2001), 287-301.

⁵³ Cf. also n. 21.

⁵⁴ As is done, e.g. by GRUEN, *Studies* (n. 3), 15-18.

1. Roman Rhetoric and the Cult of Magna Mater in Rome. The poet Martial deploys an image of a gallus rather frequently (and humorously, if you were not one of his targets). In one outlandishly overwrought epigram, Martial manages to ridicule when it was out and about in the streets of Rome (epigraph). In his great epic of Roman national identity, the Aeneid, Virgil contemptuously employs "Phrygian eunuch" as an insult.¹² Similarly, according to 6 Mart. 5.41.1¹³ (trans. Rome required a great foundation story, and the legend of Romulus and Remus effectively filled that void. Its longevity is testament to the quality of the story as well as to its importance to a great civilisation. The myth. Romulus and Remus were twin brothers. Their mother, Rhea Silvia was the daughter of Numitor, king of Alba Longa, an ancient city of Latium. Before the twins are conceived, Rhea Silvia's uncle Amulius takes power, kills Numitor's male heirs and forces Rhea Silvia to become a Vestal Virgin. The ancient Greeks and Romans had many enemies. Yet one of their greatest, most enduring foes were the nomadic Scythians. Join Dan Snow at the British Museum, where he discusses the Scythians and their extraordinary way of life with St John Simpson. Romans knew Cybele as Magna Mater ("Great Mother"), or as Magna Mater deorum Idaea ("great Idaean mother of the gods"), equivalent to the Greek title Meter Theon Idaia ("Mother of the Gods, from Mount Ida"). Rome officially adopted her cult during the Second Punic War (218 to 201 BC), after dire prodigies, including a meteor shower, a failed harvest and famine, seemed to warn of Rome's imminent defeat. The Roman Senate and its religious advisers consulted the Sibylline oracle and decided that Carthage