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## COLOURS IN CONFLICT: CATULLUS' USE OF COLOUR IMAGERY IN C.63<sup>1</sup>

Catullus' love of colourful effects in his poems has often been noted but the contribution that these make to his poetry has not been fully appreciated. Colour words can be very powerful devices in the hands of a poet, for they carry both visual impact and emotional overtones. Catullus appears well aware of their power for, as certain scholars have observed, he can make use of colour words to increase the emotional intensity of his poems and give them additional levels of meaning.<sup>2</sup> This is especially apparent in Catullus' longer poems where he has more scope for description and for experimenting with the repeated use of colour images.<sup>3</sup>

C.63 is a prime example of Catullus' skill in using colour motifs. Key features of this poem are the repetition of words in similar metrical positions and the way in which the images of the first half are echoed in the second. The colour imagery, with its use of repetition and inversion, plays a major part in this, for the colours in the second half of the poem pick up those in the first half, but they gradually acquire negative overtones as the poem progresses. On another level the colour imagery makes an important contribution to the pattern of conflict and contrast which extends throughout the poem. There is the contrast between speed and calm, wilderness and civilization, madness and sanity, masculine and feminine.<sup>4</sup> In a similar fashion, white is contrasted with black, dark with light, white with red, and green with white, and in each of these instances, one of the colour elements emerges chromatically stronger than the other and ultimately overwhelms or corrupts it as, for instance, the darkness of the grove eventually overwhelms the light of dawn and the greenness of the landscape yields to the whiteness of snow and shore. These vividly contrasting colours reflect the extreme emotional experiences through which Attis is passing (madness, sanity, euphoria,

<sup>1</sup> This article began its life as a conference paper (given at the ASCS/AULLA conference held in February 1995 at the University of New England, Armidale) and then evolved into a chapter of my thesis on the use of colour imagery by the poets Catullus, Propertius, and Horace. I am very grateful to Professor Peter Toohey (Calgary) and Dr Anne Geddes (Adelaide) for their comments on this piece as a thesis chapter and also to Professor Toohey for his subsequent comments on my revision of the article. I would also like to thank Professor Elaine Fantham (Princeton) and Professor Emanuele Narducci (Florence) for the helpful remarks that they made on the chapter when examining my thesis. I also received many helpful comments and suggestions, not only at the ASCS/AULLA conference but also during two seminars which I gave on this paper in 2000, firstly at the University of Calgary and then at Cambridge. Finally I extend my gratitude to an anonymous *CQ* referee for his/her encouraging remarks and suggestions for extending the scope of the piece.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, the colour adjective *candidus* which Kenneth Quinn suggests is an emotionally charged word for Catullus: *Catullus: The Poems*<sup>2</sup> (London and New York, 1973), 116. It occurs fifteen times in Catullus' poetry.

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. P. Fedeli's comments on Catullus' use of colourful effects in his marriage hymn, C.61: *Catullus' Carmen 61*<sup>2</sup>, trans. M. Nardella (Amsterdam, 1983), 28, 85, 122–3. Both D. P. Harmon, 'Nostalgia for the age of heroes in Catullus 64', *Latomus* 32 (1973), 311–31, and M. O'Connell, 'Pictorialism and meaning in Catullus 64', *Latomus* 36 (1977), 746–56 have demonstrated how Catullus uses repetition of colour imagery to great effect in C.64, employing red/white and purple/white motifs throughout the poem; on this see n. 53.

<sup>4</sup> C. A. Rubino explores the many contrasts in the poem, proposing that it is organized upon a series of oppositions which all stem from the primary opposition of masculine and feminine: 'Myth and mediation in the Attis poem of Catullus', *Ramus* 3 (1974), 157–8.

despair) and help to make more apparent the heightened consciousness of someone in a state of religious fervour. Catullus employs such colour contrasts in combination with other contrasting sensations (warmth and cold, soft and hard) to draw the reader into Attis' psychic world. This device of a literary representation so vivid that it turns the reader into an eyewitness was generally known to the ancient critics as *ἐνάργεια*<sup>5</sup> and it depended strongly on appeal to the sense of sight.<sup>6</sup> It would be true to say that the colours in C.63 play a significant role in heightening the sense of *ἐνάργεια* experienced by Catullus' readers and that it is largely by means of this device that the readers are able to empathize more fully with Attis' emotional journey. Thus an examination of the colours in this poem not only furthers our understanding and appreciation of how Catullus vividly conveys emotion but also helps to highlight an often overlooked aspect of his technique.

In this article I explore Catullus' use of colour imagery in C.63. First the sorts of colour words which Catullus employs in the poem will be examined along with their distribution within the poem: this is to show how the colour words reflect the intensity of the mood, forming their own circular pattern within the poem's ring structure. A detailed analysis of each colour image in the poem will then demonstrate how these colours are placed in contrast with one another and how the colour imagery as a whole takes on a negative cast as the poem progresses, accentuating its tense and tragic atmosphere. The colour analysis is divided into three major sections: (1) dark and light, (2) white and red, (3) green and white. Each colour element is first analysed on its own and then its contrasts or 'conflicts' with other colours in the poem are explored. In order to gain a greater understanding of Catullus' use of colour as a stylistic device, some attention is also given to Catullus' use of colour imagery in other poems. In addition, comparisons are drawn with the ways in which other ancient poets, both Greek and Roman, make use of colours in their poetry. Such comparisons enable the reader to appreciate the rich tradition of colour imagery upon which Catullus is drawing and how he adopts the colour images of his predecessors and contemporaries and uses them to convey the emotional depth of Attis' experience.

### PATTERNS OF COLOUR IMAGERY

The colour elements in C.63 can be divided into two basic categories: 'explicit' and 'implicit' colour words. There are eight instances of actual or 'explicit' colour terms in the poem: *niveus* (8), *viridis* (30, 70), *aureus* (39), *albus* (40), *roseus* (74), *rutilus* (83), and *albico* (87). In addition, there are around twenty-six instances of words which

<sup>5</sup> See G. Zanker's discussion of the term in his article 'Enargeia in the ancient criticism of poetry', *RhM* 124 (1981), 297–311 and later in his book *Realism in Alexandrian Poetry: A Literature and its Audience*, (London/Wolfboro, NH, 1987), 39–54. Zanker (1981), 297 quotes Dionysius of Halicarnassus on the rhetorical style of Lysias as giving the most thorough definition of *ἐνάργεια*: [ἐνάργεια] δ' ἐστὶ δύναμις τις ὑπὸ τὰς αἰσθήσεις ἄγουσα τὰ λεγόμενα, γίγνεται δ' ἐκ τῆς τῶν παρακολουθούτων λήψεως. ὁ δὲ προσέχων τὴν διάνοιαν τοῖς Λυσίου λόγοις οὐχ οὕτως ἔσται σκαιὸς ἢ δυσάρεστος ἢ βραδὺς τὸν νοῦν, ὅς οὐχ ὑπολήφεται γινόμενα τὰ δηλούμενα ὁρᾶν καὶ ὡσπερ παροῦσιν οἷς ἂν ὁ ῥήτωρ εἰσάγη προσώποις ὀμιλεῖν. (*Lys.* 7). According to Zanker, *ἐνάργεια* was felt to have special relevance to poetry (*ibid.* 304) and it was current in the criticism of poetry as early as the second century B.C. (*ibid.* 307). Zanker (1987), 47 associates it with the Alexandrian poets and their interest in pictorially vivid description.

<sup>6</sup> Zanker (n. 5, 1981), 299 quotes Cicero who speaks of the Latin equivalent *inlustris oratio* and its close connection with sight: *est enim haec pars orationis quae rem constituat paene ante oculos, is enim maxime sensus attingitur, sed et ceteri tamen et maxime mens ipsa moveri potest* (*Part. Or.* 6.20).

give an impression of colour ('implicit' colour words), although it is difficult to fix on an exact number because a few are somewhat marginal and subjective. The words which, it will be argued, would give a strong impression of colour, light, or darkness to the Roman reader are *nemus* (2, 12, 20, 32, 52, 58, 72, 79, 89), *opacus* (3, 32), *sanguis* (7) *hederiger* (23), *radians* (39), *nix* (53, 70), and *marmor* (88).<sup>7</sup> There are also a few words that, though in themselves they do not convey a particularly strong impression of colour or shining, will be demonstrated to have chromatic significance in the context of this poem and in association with other colour words: *silvis* (3), *lustrum* (40), *nox* (41), *umbra* (41), *flos* (64), *floridus* (66), *Sol* (39, 67), *virgulta* (86). Thus, in the broadest possible terms, there are thirty-four instances of colour, light, or darkness within the poem.

This is a remarkable total, considering that the rapid pace of the poem leaves little room for extended description and large collections of colour adjectives. At the beginning of the poem the reader is plunged into the action: Attis castrates himself within the space of a few lines and no mention is made, at this stage, of his background or motivation. His comrades appear and disappear without explanation and little space is given to the extraneous or merely decorative. Consequently, in this poem colour words rarely appear in large groups or 'clusters'. The largest collection of colour words (seven in total) occurs at lines 39–41 followed by 86–9 (four) and sometimes an explicit and implicit colour term appear together in the same or in successive lines (7–8, 70). Unlike C.64, however, in which certain colour clusters leap out at the reader's eye and cause the reader to pause,<sup>8</sup> in C.63 most of the colours appear in flashes: the reader scarcely has time to absorb their significance before the story races on. But this does not mean that they have less impact. In this poem with its economy of language and where descriptions are kept to a minimum (there is only one major simile: 33), colour words have increased importance and play a significant role in augmenting the vividness of the scene set before the reader. As Sellar puts it in speaking of the pictorial environment of the poem, 'everything is seen in those sharply-defined forms, which are imprinted on the brain in moments of intense excitement or agony'.<sup>9</sup> It is as though the reader is compelled to see everything through Attis' eyes and share in the intensity of his visual experience.<sup>10</sup>

It is striking that the colour words, with their heightened impact, play a major part in determining the shape of the poem. There is some disagreement among scholars regarding the way in which Catullus has structured his poem: an examination of the

<sup>7</sup> Note that *sanguis*, *nix*, and *marmor* are themselves the source of the colour adjectives *sanguineus*, *niveus*, and *marmoreus*. In the quotations that follow, 'explicit' colour words are designated by bold, 'implicit' words underlined.

<sup>8</sup> For instance, line 49 *tin~~ct~~a tegit roseo conchyl~~i~~ purpura fuco* in which all but one word *tegit* is associated with colour (five colour words in a single line) or lines 44–5 *fulgenti splendent auro atque argento. I candet ebur solis, collucent pocula mensae* in which there are seven words associated with colour or shining in the space of two lines.

<sup>9</sup> W. Y. Sellar, *The Roman Poets of the Republic* (Edinburgh, 1863), 370.

<sup>10</sup> This heightened or altered degree of perception seems to have been a feature of orgiastic cults. J. N. Bremmer, 'Greek maenadism reconsidered', *ZPE* 55 (1984), 267–86, discusses how the violent shaking of the Maenads' heads would have helped them to concentrate on external stimuli such as music and lights (278–9) and how overexertion, resulting in low blood glucose and the production of adrenaline, would have led to a change of degree of awareness and increased susceptibility to visions (280). Although Bremmer concentrates mainly on the Bacchantes, comparisons are drawn with the cult of Cybele (279). It is highly likely that the devotees of Cybele, who in C.63 are likewise associated with head tossing (line 23) and overexertion (lines 18, 25, 26, 30), would have shared similar sensory experiences.

colour imagery helps to clarify the issue. The main area of dispute is about the turning-point of the poem, the point at which it becomes evident that Attis has lost control of his destiny and the mood begins to change. Sandy sees it as line 33, the simile comparing Attis to a heifer.<sup>11</sup> This view seems to be unduly influenced by Sandy's concentration on the animal imagery of the poem. Small agrees with the view that Attis' monologue (50–73) is the climax of the poem with the two other speeches symmetrically corresponding to each other.<sup>12</sup> The most interesting view, however, is that of Traill, who modifies Schäfer's idea that line 38 (*abit in quiete molli rabidus furor animi*) is the turning-point. Traill sees lines 39–43, the description of the sunrise, as the pivotal point of an elaborate ring structure.<sup>13</sup> Not only is there a radical shift in subject-matter and tone at this point in the poem (from the dramatic narrative of Attis' plight to the epic realm of the supernatural),<sup>14</sup> but these lines are clearly marked off by verbal repetitions. Line 44 repeats the ideas and vocabulary of line 38.<sup>15</sup>

Traill's choice of lines 39–43 as the pivotal point of the poem is confirmed by an examination of Catullus' use of colour imagery. The first three lines of this passage have the greatest concentration of colour words in the poem (seven in three lines) and there is a cluster of words for light and white at this point which is in contrast with the darkness of Cybele's grove on either side:

sed ubi oris **aurei Sol radiantibus** oculis  
 lustravit aethera **album**, sola dura, mare ferum  
 pepulitque **noctis umbras** vegetis sonipedibus

(39–41)

Here there are two explicit colour terms (*aurei*, *album*) in successive lines, with three terms suggesting light (*Sol*, *radiantibus*, *lustravit*) reinforcing them and *noctis umbras* placed in contrast. In these three lines are brought together the motifs of light and dark which dominate the poem. As we will see, the appearance of the light at this point signifies a major change in Attis' state of mind as he emerges from the darkness of his madness. With the return of the light Attis sees things as they really are and from this point on the colour images take on a more negative cast, reflecting Attis' growing disillusionment and his alienation from his environment.

The other colour words appear in a reasonably even distribution around this focal point: there are eleven colour elements (two explicit and nine implicit) before lines 39–41 and sixteen colour elements (four explicit and twelve implicit) after. The manner in which these words are distributed lends support to the view that the poem has a ring structure. As Small puts it, 'the poem as a whole achieves the perfection of a circle, turning back upon itself in the second half to re-echo the images and motifs of the opening sections'.<sup>16</sup> This is also true of the colours in the poem: *nivem* in line 53 picks up *niveis* from line 8, *viridis* in 70 echoes *viridem* in 30, *roseis* (74) and *rutilam* (83) recall *sanguine* (7), and *albicans* (87) picks up *album* (40). It will be shown how, within this circular structure, Catullus uses repetition of key colour images to convey the changing nature of Attis' experience.

<sup>11</sup> G. N. Sandy, 'The imagery of Catullus 63', *TAPhA* 99 (1968), 395.

<sup>12</sup> G. P. Small, 'The unity of Catullus LXIII', *SPh* 49 (1952), 4.

<sup>13</sup> D. A. Traill, 'Catullus 63: rings around the sun', *CPh* 76 (1981), 212–13. See also K. M. W. Shipton, 'Attis and sleep: Catullus 63.39–43', *LCM* 9 (1984), 39 and H. P. Syndikus, *Catull: eine Interpretation*, II: *Die grossen Gedichte (61–68)* (Darmstadt, 1990), 81, 89, for similar views.

<sup>14</sup> Syndikus (n. 13), 89.

<sup>15</sup> Shipton (n. 13), 39.

<sup>16</sup> Small (n. 12), 4.

## 1. DARK AND LIGHT

1.1 Dark (*nemus*, *opacus*)

The dominant visual contrast in the poem is dark versus light (or black versus white).<sup>17</sup> The darkness predominates throughout the body of the poem with the use of the noun *nemus* and the adjective *opacus*. *Nemus* occurs nine times in this poem,<sup>18</sup> a remarkable total, especially considering that Catullus employs the word nowhere else in his poetry. In addition, as Elder<sup>19</sup> has pointed out, it is frequently in the same metrical position, emphasizing its status as a key word. Thus what Newman refers to as ‘the mysterious, enticing, fearful and ineluctable forest’<sup>20</sup> is kept constantly in the readers’ minds. Although *nemus* is not itself a colour term it is associated with *opaca* twice: in lines 2–3 (*Phrygium ut nemus citato cupide pede tetigit / adiitque opaca silvis redimita loca deae*) in which the *opaca loca* are used as a synonym for *nemus* and 32 (*comitata tympano Attis per opaca nemora dux*) in which the word is applied directly to *nemora*. The term *opacus* is not one of the usual terms for blackness or darkness<sup>21</sup> but it catches the attention of the reader in a way that the more familiar words *niger* or *ater* might not. The *Oxford Latin Dictionary* gives its first meaning as ‘sheltered from the heat and light of the sun’ (OLD 1250); thus the word implicitly conveys the idea that the *nemus* is a place from which the sun is excluded.<sup>22</sup> Like *nemus*, *opacus* is not a word Catullus employs frequently outside C.63, but he does use it to describe Egnatius’ beard where it carries the same connotations of blackness, bushiness, and denseness.<sup>23</sup> Therefore from the start of the poem *nemus* is linked with a word which would give the Roman reader an impression of a wood so dense and overgrown that the sun’s rays struggle to penetrate it. These connotations are carried right through to the end of the poem. In its final use in line 89 *nemora* is placed in opposition to the *umida albicantis loca litoris* of 87; in this way its darkness is further emphasized by being placed in contrast with the whiteness of the shore.<sup>24</sup>

When *nemus* appears at the start of the poem its overtones are not entirely negative (*Phrygium ut nemus citato cupide pede tetigit / adiitque opaca silvis redimita loca deae*,

<sup>17</sup> Many scholars have made reference to this contrast including Syndikus (n. 13), 83: ‘So sind im Gefüge des Gedichtes eine helle und eine dunkle Welt einander gegenübergestellt.’ See also E. Schäfer, *Das Verhältnis von Erlebnis und Kunstgestalt bei Catull* (Wiesbaden, 1966), 100; M. Lenchantin de Gubernatis, *Il Libro di Catullo* (Turin, 1945), 138; Small (n. 12); 8, Rubino (n. 4), 158. References to darkness are not uncommon in poems about the Galli: K. M. W. Shipton, ‘The “Attis” of Catullus’, *CQ* 37 (1987), 445, n. 11, points out that Dioscorides’ epigram about a Gallus is set against the darkness of evening just as Catullus’ poem is set against the darkness of the grove. Similarly in a ‘Simonides’ epigram the Gallus takes refuge from a snowstorm in the darkness of a cave: ‘Simonides’ 2.3304–5 in A. S. F. Gow and D. L. Page, *The Greek Anthology: Hellenistic Epigrams* (Cambridge, 1965).

<sup>18</sup> Including a compound *nemorivagus* (72).

<sup>19</sup> J. P. Elder, ‘Catullus’ *Attis*’, *AJPh* 68 (1947), 402.

<sup>20</sup> J. K. Newman, *Roman Catullus and the Modification of the Alexandrian Sensibility* (Hildesheim, 1990), 361. See also Syndikus (n. 13), 82.

<sup>21</sup> J. André does not list it as a colour term: *Étude sur les termes de couleur dans la langue latine* (Paris, 1949), 416.

<sup>22</sup> Compare Lucretius 2.115 (. . . *cum solis lumina cumque / inserti fundunt radii per opaca domorum*), Virgil, *Aen.* 3.619 (. . . *domus sanie dapibus cruentis, / intus opaca, ingens . . .*) and Livy 3.25.7 (*quercus ingens arbor praetorio imminabat, cuius umbra opaca sedes erat*), all of which employ *opacus* with similar connotations.

<sup>23</sup> *Egnati, opaca quem bonum facit barba / et dens Hibera defricatus urinas* (37.19–20). Here the black beard is placed in contrast to Egnatius’ brilliant white teeth.

<sup>24</sup> Traill also makes this point (n. 13), 214, n. 12. On this image see further below.

2–3). At the beginning of the poem the word has protective overtones, signifying a sheltered place, surrounded by forests. This also perhaps carries a sexual significance for the adverb *cupide* appears in close proximity to it.<sup>25</sup> In addition the noun *silvis*, although overshadowed by the dominant epithet *opaca*, possibly brings with it a suggestion of the greenness of trees, creating an impression of green shadows.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, when Attis makes reference to the *nemus* in his first speech, he sees it as something desirable, a home that is to be sought after and journeyed to (*agite ite ad alta, Gallae, Cybeles nemora simul*, 12; *Phrygiam ad domum Cybebes, Phrygia ad nemora deae*, 20). However in the narrative that follows Attis' speech, Catullus uses *nemus* with ironical overtones (*comitata tympano Attis per opaca nemora dux*, 32). This is perhaps the moment of greatest triumph for Attis, for he is acting as a leader to the Gallae in their quest for the home of Cybele. But by placing *nemora* next to *dux* and emphasizing its darkness by the use of *opaca*, Catullus hints at the folly of it all: Attis' mind, like Theseus' at 64.207, is filled with blinding darkness. The irony produced by this juxtaposition of *nemora* and *dux* is heightened by the following line in which Attis is revealed in his true light, not as a leader but as a recalcitrant heifer (*veluti iuvenca vitans onus indomita iugi*, 33). Significantly, line 32 contains almost the last reference to leadership in the poem.<sup>27</sup>

It is after Attis' awakening and return to sanity that *nemus* acquires a strongly negative cast and the darkness of the wood becomes increasingly linked with Attis' isolation and spiritual death.<sup>28</sup> In Attis' second speech the *nemus* is depicted as a cold and inhospitable wilderness (. . . *ad Idae tetuli nemora pedem / ut apud nivem et ferarum gelida stabula forem*, 52–3). Here the *nemus* is no longer a secluded place filled with green shadows, but icy and barren and occupied by wild beasts—a motif that will be reiterated in line 72 where the compound *memorivagus* is employed of the boars which inhabit it (*ubi cervae silvicultrix, ubi aper memorivagus?*). In his second reference to the *nemus* in the monologue, there are ironical overtones even stronger than in line 32 (*egone a mea remota haec ferar in nemora domo?*, 58). This line picks up line 20 where Attis identified the *nemus* as a desirable home. Here, however, he distinguishes the two; he laments that he will soon be carried off into the *nemus* which is far from his home. The irony of this change is emphasized by the placing of *nemora* and *domo* together at the end of the line.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> The other occasion on which Catullus employs the adverb *cupide* is at 64.267: *quae postquam cupide spectando Thessala pubes / expleta est*. . . Here the adverb also carries sexual implications, suggesting the almost voyeuristic eagerness with which the Thessalian youths gaze at the scenes depicted on the marriage coverlet. The cognate adjective *cupidus* is also frequently employed by Catullus with strong sexual overtones, e.g. 61.32, 61.54, 64.86, 64.147, 64.374, 70.3, 107.4. Catullus' Roman readers may well have been anticipating such sexual overtones at the beginning of C.63, for in many versions of the myth Attis appears as Cybele's lover. See further B.-M. Näsström, *The Abhorrence of Love: Studies in Rituals and Mystic Aspects in Catullus' Poem of Attis* (Uppsala, 1989), 34.

<sup>26</sup> Catullus describes a wood as green in C.34, his hymn to Diana: *montium domina ut fores / silvarumque virentium* (9–10). As Small (n. 12), 8 comments, 'The Idaean wilderness, we are told, is shadowy and green.'

<sup>27</sup> In line 34 leadership is also mentioned (*rapidae ducem sequuntur Gallae properipedem*) but, immediately following the simile about the heifer, this line merely adds to the sense of irony.

<sup>28</sup> Darkness is of course frequently employed in ancient literature in association with death, destruction, and loss. For the associations of darkness with death, see *Iliad* 2.834, 11.332; *Lucr.* 2.580; *Prop.* 2.11.4. Catullus himself often makes use of the negative associations of darkness; he uses it to signify death at 3.11 and 5.6 and the destructive power of time at 68.44.

<sup>29</sup> See Small (n. 12), 13 who discusses the irony of this line in great detail. See also P. Fedeli, 'Struttura e stile dei monologhi di Attis nel carme 63 di Catullo', *RFIC* 106 (1978), 46.

Attis' worst fears are realized, and in the narrative which follows Cybele commands her lion to drive him into the *nemus* (*fac uti furoris ictu reditum in nemora ferat*, 79). Here the *nemus* is associated with the *furoris ictu*, with the return of madness to Attis. Finally, *nemus* is employed in the second last line of the narrative as the lion pursues *demens* Attis into the woods (. . . *illa demens fugit in nemora fera*, 89). In its final occurrence Catullus emphasizes the wildness and inhospitality of the *nemus* by the use of the adjective *fera*, picking up the image of the wild beasts which Attis envisaged as inhabiting the *nemus* in lines 52–3 and 72. It is significant that this, the last colour reference in the poem, denotes the departure of colour from the narrative. The poem begins and ends in darkness.<sup>30</sup>

### 1.2 Dark versus light (*nemuslaureus, lustrō, radio, albus*)

As one would expect, the appearance of the sun's light signifies the return of Attis' reason. This passage in the middle of the poem (39–40), full of words for light, is in stark contrast to the frequent references to the darkness of the *nemus* on either side. Elder has pointed out that there are parallels in the *Iliad* (23.212–32) and the *Ajax* (670–6) for the equation of dawn with sanity.<sup>31</sup> In C.63, however, although the dawn signifies the return of Attis' reason, it does not have entirely positive overtones. Catullus personifies the sun, giving it a golden face and glittering eyes (*sed ubi oris aurei Sol radiantibus oculis*, 39).<sup>32</sup> With the golden face of the sun the reader is led to expect a joyful image, for the word *aureus* is often employed in happy contexts in Catullus (a prime example of this is the use of *aureus* in reference to the feet of the bride in C.61).<sup>33</sup> Yet there are other words in the passage which counter these joyful overtones. The verb *lustrare*, which means 'scan' or 'survey' as well as 'illuminate' (*OLD* 1052, s.v. 5), gives the impression that the sun is dispassionately examining everything from on high. What the sun illuminates is a bleak, harsh landscape: the sky is bright or white, the earth is hard and the sea is wild (*lustravit aethera album, sola dura, mare ferum*, 40). As Weinreich puts it, 'Schon hier, in der narratio also, ist die Landschaft desillusioniert und damit in glänzender Weise die ernüchterte Stimmung des nun einsetzenden Reuemonologs episch vorbereitet.'<sup>34</sup> The light is not kindly, it reveals things as they are and strips away all illusion, so there are no dark places in which to hide.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, in a sense, the usual associations of light and dark are reversed in this poem. For the followers of Cybele the dark seems kindly, for it is their natural habitat; the light, on the other hand, is harsh and uncompromising. Once again the reader is compelled to view the scene through the distorted perception of Attis.

The use of *radians* in reference to the sun's eyes reinforces this idea. As with *nemus*, C.63 is the only poem in which Catullus employs this word; his favourite word to

<sup>30</sup> See also Traill (n. 13), 214.

<sup>31</sup> Elder (n. 19), 399, n. 14. See also *Bacchae* (1266–71) where the sky seems brighter to Agave when her reason is returning, and *Heracles* (1089–90) where Heracles on recovering his sanity says . . . δέδορξ' ἄπερ με δεῖ/ αἰθέρα τε καὶ γῆν τόξα θ' Ἥλιου τάδε.

<sup>32</sup> See P. Fedeli on the sources of this image from Greek drama and epic poetry: 'Dal furor divino al rimpianto del passato. Tecnica e stile di Catull. 63, 27–49', *GIF* 29 (1977), 45.

<sup>33</sup> *transfer omine cum bono / limen aureolos pedes, / rasilemque subi forem* (159–61). See also Catullus 2b.2 and 61.95.

<sup>34</sup> O. Weinreich, 'Catull's Attisgedicht', *Mélanges Franz Cumont* 4 (Brussels, 1936), 479.

<sup>35</sup> Compare our English expression 'in the cold light of day'. Attis, like the Sun, will see things all too clearly. As Shipton says (n. 13), 39, 'Dawn looks around the landscape (*lustravit* 40) with his eyes surveying all the elements clearly. This has the effect of banishing the shadows. When Attis awakes he too sees his surroundings clearly (46)'. See also Weinreich (n. 34), 478.

describe shining is *fulgeo*.<sup>36</sup> *Radio* is also employed of stars, armour, and cats' eyes<sup>37</sup> and its primary meaning is 'to radiate light' (*OLD* 1571), although 'glitter' is also an apt translation. Elder points out that the line *sed ubi oris aurei Sol radiantibus oculis* is echoed further on by line 48 (*ibi maria vasta visens lacrimantibus oculis*), for *lacrimantibus oculis* is in the same metrical position in the line.<sup>38</sup> In this way the sun's glittering eyes are placed in opposition to Attis' tearful eyes, and the unfeeling nature of the sun is contrasted with the warmth of human emotion. Later on, as Sandy suggests,<sup>39</sup> there is an ironic contrast of this sunrise with the happy sunrises Attis had known in his own land, sunrises which brought warmth and human companionship (*mihi floridis corollis redimita domus erat, / liquendum ubi esset orto mihi Sole cubiculum*, 66–7).

In this context, the image of the *aether albus*, although not negative in itself, contributes to the negative overtones of the passage. This is unusual, for in Catullus words for white usually have positive connotations.<sup>40</sup> Not only does the *aether albus* contribute to the impression of a light which is strong and harsh but, placed as it is next to the hard earth and wild sea, the white sky gains a sense of remoteness: like the sun it is above human affairs.<sup>41</sup> These connotations of *albus* will be picked up in the final colour cluster of the poem.

## 2. WHITE AND RED

### 2.1 White and red applied to Attis (*niveus, roseus*)

Three adjectives are used to describe Attis' appearance, two of them colour words: *niveus, roseus*, and *tener*. These adjectives are not out of place in descriptions of the Galli. In Varro's *Eumenides* the protagonist, who encounters the Galli in their temple, uses *tener* to describe them.<sup>42</sup> It also seems that a fair complexion was associated with cults such as these; in the *Bacchae* Pentheus makes fun of the fair complexion of Dionysus.<sup>43</sup> Vermaseren comments that sometimes the Galli were heavily made-up with their faces resembling whitewashed walls.<sup>44</sup> In a somewhat similar fashion they had a preference for feminine attire.<sup>45</sup>

In C.63 Catullus lays emphasis on all three adjectives, placing each of them<sup>46</sup> in a dominant position at the beginning of its line:

<sup>36</sup> Catullus employs *fulgeo* nine times; at 8.3, 8.8, 64.44, 64.387, 66.9, 66.61, 66.94, 68.71, 68.134.

<sup>37</sup> *Aen.* 8.23 (moon); *Ov. Am.* 3.3.9 (eyes like stars); *Prop.* 4.1.27 (weapons); *Plin. N.H.* 11.151 (cats' eyes).

<sup>38</sup> Elder (n. 19), 403. See also Shipton (n. 13), 39–40 who extends the comparison between Attis and the Sun.

<sup>39</sup> Sandy (n. 11), 396–7.

<sup>40</sup> It is true that it is *candidus* rather than *albus* which is usually employed by Catullus with positive overtones but he does use *albus* at 61.187 in his description of the colours of the bride's face.

<sup>41</sup> A similar effect is produced by the description of Olympus at *Od.* 6.41ff. where bright air and white light are associated with a realm which is unchanging and unassailable.

<sup>42</sup> *nam quae venustas hic adest gallantibus! / quae casta vestis! aetasque adulescentium! / quae teneris species!* fr. 135 in J.-P. Cèbe, *Varron, Satires Ménippées* 4 (Rome, 1977).

<sup>43</sup> *λευκήν δὲ χροιάν ἐκ παρασκευῆς ἔχεις* (457).

<sup>44</sup> M. J. Vermaseren, *Cybele and Attis: The Myth and the Cult* (London, 1977), 97.

<sup>45</sup> Fr. 133 in Cèbe (n. 42).

<sup>46</sup> *Niveus* and *roseus* are employed only once. *Tener* is employed twice; it is also used in line 10 to describe Attis' hands and in this verse it is placed in the middle of the line.

<b>niveis</b> citata cepit manibus leve typanum	8
<b>roseis</b> ut huic labellis sonitus <citus> abiit	74
<b>teneramque</b> vidit Attin prope marmora pelagi	88

*Niveus* is the most important of these adjectives for it is the first to be employed, directly after Attis has castrated himself. Frequently employed of the skin of women,<sup>47</sup> it is the first indication that Attis has changed from male to female; thereafter feminine adjectives and pronouns are used to describe him. Some scholars, however, have other interpretations of the significance of this colour adjective. Sellar thinks that both Attis' snowy hands and his rosy lips are used to indicate his vulnerability: '[they] force upon the mind the contrast between the tender youth and beauty of Atys and the power of the passion which possesses him'.<sup>48</sup> This is no doubt part of their effect, for *tener* 'soft', 'delicate' is used in association with *niveus* and employed to describe Attis' fingers (*quatiensque terga tauri teneris cava digitis*, 10). Moreover Catullus employs *niveus* in a similar fashion in C.64; by using the word to describe the slaughtered Polyxena's limbs, he emphasizes her vulnerability and the horror of the deed.<sup>49</sup> Quinn, on the other hand, disagrees with the interpretation that the adjectives *niveus* and *roseus* are used to reinforce the idea that Attis has become female. He thinks rather that they are indications that Attis was a *puer delicatus* in his former life, one who was not able to make the transition to loving women.<sup>50</sup> It is true that *niveus* and *roseus* can both be used in this way<sup>51</sup> and thus may be meant to give the reader the impression of 'the sort of young man Attis was'.<sup>52</sup> But such an explanation does not take full account of the significance of the placement of the colour term *niveus*. Employed immediately after the critical moment of castration and reinforced by the feminine adjective *citata*, it emphasizes the dramatic change that has taken place in Attis.

## 2.2 White versus red (*niveus/sanguis, roseus*) and red versus red (*roseus/rutilus*)

As well as employing terms for red and white to describe Attis' appearance, Catullus makes use of the contrast of red with white with more ominous associations. His use of white/red contrasts is similar to the way in which he employs them in C.64 where the colour contrast also acquires ominous overtones.<sup>53</sup> The beautiful picture of Attis'

<sup>47</sup> For instance Cat. 64.364; Prop. 3.6.12, 3.14.11; Hor. *Carm.* 2.4.3, 3.27.25; Ov. *Am.* 3.3.6.

<sup>48</sup> Sellar (n. 9), 370.

<sup>49</sup> *cum teres excelso coacervatum aggere bustum / excipiet niveos percussae virginis artus* (363–4). Note the placement of the word *niveos* immediately before *percussae*, emphasizing the contrast between the brutality of the deed and the fragile beauty of the girl.

<sup>50</sup> K. Quinn, *Catullus: An Interpretation* (London, 1972), 249–50. See also Lenchantin (n. 17), 137 and V. Bongi, *Catullo Attis (Carme 63): Studio introduttivo, testo critico e commento* (Florence, 1944), 60.

<sup>51</sup> Compare Tibullus 1.4.12 (*hic placidam niveo pectore pellit aquam*) and Catullus' use of *roseus* in C.80 to describe Gellius' lips (quoted n. 55).

<sup>52</sup> Quinn (n. 50), 250.

<sup>53</sup> Both Harmon (n. 3), 316–18 and O'Connell (n. 3), 751–4 have examined the significance of the red, purple, and white contrasts in C.64. They argue that they increasingly acquire an air of menace: the white, red, and purple of Peleus' and Thetis' marriage couch in lines 47–9 are transformed into the purple of the sail which leads to Aegeus' suicide (225–7), the white hair of the Trojan mothers who are tearing their hair in their grief at their sons' deaths (349–51), and the

snowy white hands is given a sinister twist from the fact that they are placed in contrast with the blood of his castration which is still spattering the ground.<sup>54</sup>

etiam recente terrae sola sanguine maculans,  
**niveis** citata cepit manibus leve typanum

7–8

The blood reminds the reader that whiteness can also be a sign of the pallor of disease or ill-health. It is as though in this one act all the blood has drained from Attis' body, leaving it white and devoid of life. These associations of white are reinforced in the second half of the poem when *niveus* is picked up by its cognate noun *nix*, which is employed in a context which suggests barrenness and sterility.<sup>55</sup>

ut apud nivem et ferarum gelida stabula forem

53

Thus, as Small so aptly puts it, the image of Attis' snowy hands has 'multiple relevance'. He comments:

*niveis* not only vividly describes the effeminate hand of Attis but also reminds us of the fact that he is now condemned to live on *snowy* Ida for the rest of his life; furthermore, the adjective possesses an additional relevance in that it suggests the idea of emasculation and cold sexlessness as well as the *Veneris nimium odium* (17) which originally prompted Attis' action.<sup>56</sup>

The redness of Attis' blood is echoed later on with the reference to his mouth as *roseus* (74, quoted above). Catullus places the word in an emphatic position; it is the very first word following Attis' speech of defiance against Cybele. *Roseus*, often applied to the mouths or complexions of women and boys,<sup>57</sup> reminds the reader that, in spite of his rebellion, Attis is young and powerless and remains a handmaiden of Cybele. The colour word, echoing *sanguine*, recalls how Attis has emasculated himself; he has become both literally and figuratively impotent against the might of the goddess.<sup>58</sup>

Attis' rosy mouth is, in its turn, contrasted with the ruddy mane of the lion which Cybele unleashes against Attis:

**rutilam** ferox torosa cervice quate iubam

83

red blood of Achilles' numerous victims (357–60). As O'Connell states (n. 3, 755), 'purple and white begin as a picturesque contrast and end as elements in a scene of tragic pathos'.

<sup>54</sup> For the reference to blood cf. *A.P.* 6.51.7–8 in which a Gallus dedicates to Cybele the goads of his madness which include knives reddened with blood.

<sup>55</sup> Compare line 70 which is discussed below and 80.1–2 where Catullus uses *nix* with similar overtones of disease and unhealthiness, to describe the pallor of a boy engaged upon unhealthy activities: *Quid dicam, Gelli, quare rosea ista labella / hiberna fiant candidiora nive*. Here Catullus sets up a colour contrast between the rosy lips which signify health and the snowy white lips which have more sinister connotations.

<sup>56</sup> Small (n. 12), 10.

<sup>57</sup> For instance *Cat.* 80.1, *Prop.* 3.24.7, *Hor. Carm.* 1.13.2. On one level the term *roseus*, derived as it is from *rosa*, recalls Attis' second speech in which he refers to himself as *gymnasi flos* (line 64). On this image see further below in section 3.1.

<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, Shipton (n. 13), 40 thinks that *roseus*, a stock epithet for the sunrise, echoes the passage about the dawn (39–41) and is meant to emphasize the contrast between them: 'In the case of Dawn "rosiness" is part of its essential nature. In the case of Attis, however, his "rosy" lips emphasize not his beauty but his completely non-natural change into a female condition.' This is another instance of multiple relevance; this further dimension to the colour adjective *roseus* enriches the numerous contrasts of the poem.

Although *roseus* and *rutilus* both belong to the red colour group<sup>59</sup> the link between the two terms is the most tenuous in the poem, firstly because they are nine lines apart and secondly because, as terms for redness, the words are rarely associated.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, Catullus links the two words by placing them in the same metrical position, at the beginnings of their respective lines. Furthermore he positions them at key points within the structure of the poem. If C.63 is viewed as alternations of *narratio* and *oratio* (as it is by most scholars),<sup>61</sup> then *roseus* is the first word of the *narratio* following Attis' long soliloquy and *rutilus* is not only in the last line of Cybele's *oratio* but agrees with *iubam*, the very last word of her speech. Thus these two terms for red frame the interaction between Attis and Cybele.

As Shipton has pointed out, Catullus' description of the lion shaking its mane is similar to a description of a lion in a Hellenistic epigram about a Gallus<sup>62</sup> but, significantly, it is Catullus who introduces the colour adjective into the description. As with his choice of *opacus*, Catullus selects a word that is slightly unusual in this context, *fulvus* being the more common colour term associated with lions' manes.<sup>63</sup> According to André, *rutilus* is a red of a conspicuous brilliance and intensity, one which is often used of blood.<sup>64</sup> Thus it is a word that is well suited to conveying the fierce and bloodthirsty nature of the lion. Here the colour adjective, placed in the dominant position in the line, is followed immediately by the adjectives *ferox* and *torosa*, emphasizing the idea of the terrible force and power which is about to be unleashed. Such a colour word heightens the contrast between the murderous rage of Cybele and her cohort and the youthful vulnerability of Attis with his *roseus* mouth.<sup>65</sup> In this way the two colour adjectives which are employed of Attis (*niveus*, *roseus*) take on deathlike overtones when they are set against words associated with blood and violence (*sanguis*, *rutilus*).

### 3. GREEN AND WHITE

#### 3.1 Green (*hederiger*, *viridis*, *flos*, *floridus*)

With *hederiger* in line 23 comes the first real appearance of green in the poem (*ubi capita Maenades vi iaciunt hederigerae*).<sup>66</sup> Crowning one's head with ivy was a

<sup>59</sup> André (n. 21) groups both terms under the chapter entitled 'Le Rouge', 75–122.

<sup>60</sup> The only instance I have found where they are employed together is Sil. 1.576–8: *pellebat somnos Tithoni roscida coniux, / ac rutilus primis sonipes himmitibus altos / afflarat montes roseasque movebat habenas*.

<sup>61</sup> See Small (n. 12), 3–4.

<sup>62</sup> . . . ἐκ δὲ τενόντων / ἔνθους ῥομβητήν ἐστροφάλιξε φόβην. Alc. Mess. 21.140–1 (Gow–Page, n. 17). See further Shipton (n. 17), 445.

<sup>63</sup> André (n. 21), 133. According to André there is a subtle difference in hue between the two terms: 'Dans *fulvus* l'accent est mis davantage sur le jaune, dans *rutilus* au contraire sur le rouge, mais leur éclat possède le même degré' (88). This is perhaps why Catullus chose the term *rutilus* in preference to *fulvus*: because, with its accent on red, it picks up *roseus* and it is also suggestive of blood (see n. 64 below).

<sup>64</sup> André (n. 21), 85: 'Ils qualifient des objets d'un rouge vif, comme le sang (Ov., *Met.* V, 83; Luc. I, 615; Sil. It. I, 447; IV, 250) . . . La saturation de la teinte en est l'élément dominant, comme le sang en est le type le plus représentatif.' The word is also frequently associated with the red gleam of weapons and fire, e.g. Virgil, *Aen.* 8.529, 11.487; *Georg.* 1.454.

<sup>65</sup> See also P. Fedeli, 'Attis e il leone: dall'epigramma ellenistico al c. 63 di Catullo', *Litterature comparate, problemi e metodo: studi in onore di Ettore Paratore* 1 (Bologna, 1981), 248.

<sup>66</sup> Although there is a suggestion of green with *silvis* in line 3, it is overshadowed by the dominant colour word *opaca*.

commonplace in descriptions of cults such as these and there are frequent references to it in the *Bacchae*, sometimes in association with the colour word *χλόη*.<sup>67</sup> Ivy, according to Dodds, ‘in its evergreen vitality . . . typifies the victory of vegetation over its enemy the winter’.<sup>68</sup> It is significant that the reference to the *Maenades hederigeræ* appears in Attis’ first speech. He envisages Cybele’s home on Ida as a place which is green, fertile, and full of life and movement.

The motif of greenness is picked up by the description of Ida as *viridis* in the *narratio* which follows Attis’ *oratio*:

*viridem* citus adit Idam properante pede chorus

30

This is perhaps an attempt to render the Greek *εὐδενδρος Ἰδα*<sup>69</sup> but it is significant that Catullus chooses a colour word to do it. According to Rubino, the greenness of Ida suggests the ‘nature/culture opposition’; ‘Cybele’s mountain home, like the islands of Calypso and Polyphemus in the *Odyssey*, grows green with uncultivated vegetation.’<sup>70</sup> Green Ida represents *idealized* nature, nature as it is envisaged by the followers of Cybele. Like the ivy-crowned Maenads in line 23, it carries with it connotations of vitality and fertility. Catullus makes a similar use of imagery of greenness in C.64 when he describes the way in which the entrance court of Peleus is decorated with foliage for his marriage.<sup>71</sup> Thus *viridis* applied to Ida sums up the expectations that Attis and his companions have about the place to which they are journeying, an expectation which will be shattered in the second half of the poem.

The motif of fertility is continued in Attis’ monologue where he looks back longingly to the flowers and sunshine of his former homeland:

ego gymnasi fui flos, ego eram decus olei:  
mihi ianuae frequentes, mihi limina tepida,  
mihi floridis corollis redimita domus erat,  
linquendum ubi esset orto mihi Sole cubiculum.

64–7

Edwards associates these flowers and Catullus’ simile of the cropped flower in 11.24 with Sappho’s simile of the purple flower.<sup>72</sup> He suggests that the flowers here are meant to recall the shedding of Attis’ blood at the beginning of the poem. This may well be the case but, like the image of Attis’ snowy hands in line 8, the flowers have multiple relevance. On another level the flowers pick up the ivy of line 23 and form part of the green motif which runs throughout the poem. As Small has pointed out,<sup>73</sup> the phrase *floridis corollis redimita* echoes line 3 (*adiitque opaca silvis redimita loca deae*) where *redimita* is in the same metrical position; this relates the flowers strongly

<sup>67</sup> For example 81, 106–8, 177, 341–2. See also Euripides, *Helen* 1360 for a reference to the greenness of ivy in association with the cult of Dionysus.

<sup>68</sup> E. R. Dodds, *Euripides Bacchae*<sup>2</sup> (Oxford, 1960), 77.

<sup>69</sup> As in Alc. Mess. 21.135: . . . *Μητρὸς ἀγύρτης / Ἰδῆς εὐδένδρου πρῶνας ἐβουνοβάτει* (Gow–Page, n. 17).

<sup>70</sup> Rubino (n. 4), 159.

<sup>71</sup> *haec circum sedes late contexta locavit, / vestibulum ut molli velatum fronde vireret* (292–3). The river-god Peneus has come carrying trees from Tempe, a valley renowned for its beauty and fertility. He uses these to decorate Peleus’ forecourt.

<sup>72</sup> *ὅταν τὰν δάκνωθον ἐν ἄρσει ποιμένες ἄνδρες / πόσσι καταστειβῶσι, χάμαι δέ τε πόρφυρον ἄνθος*: fr. 105c in E. Lobel and D. Page, *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta* (Oxford, 1955). See further M. J. Edwards, ‘Apples, blood and flowers: Sapphic bridal imagery in Catullus’, *Coll. Latomus* 217 (1992), 181–203 at 187–8.

<sup>73</sup> Small (n. 12), 13–14.

to the motifs of vegetation and greenery. Small emphasizes the irony of the contrast, commenting ‘the cultivated flowers of home have been exchanged for the wild forest’.<sup>74</sup> The contrast between the two environments is heightened by the other images in this passage. Attis’ former home, as well as being filled with flowers, was warm (*tepida*, 65) and sunny (*Sole*, 67), whereas Mount Ida is cold, dark, and snowy.<sup>75</sup>

### 3.2 Green versus white (*viridis*/*nix*; *virgulta*/*albico*, *marmora*)

The green motif is brought to a climax in line 70:

ego **viridis** algida Idae nive amicta loca colam?

In this line the greenness of Ida is brought into contrast with the whiteness of its snow.<sup>76</sup> This is a powerful and dramatic colour contrast; here Catullus brings two colour motifs into conflict. It is not too fanciful to state that in this line the white begins to overwhelm the green as Attis’ hopes of an Ida that is green and fertile vanish once and for all: green Ida has turned out to be snow-clad. Note the skilful interweaving of the colour images by the placement of the words. *Viridis* agrees with *Idae* but the two words are separated by *algida* which agrees with *loca* while *nive* is placed in between.<sup>77</sup> Catullus emphasizes the coldness (*algida*) of the snow as well as its whiteness and, once again, this is in contrast to the sunniness and warmth of Attis’ homeland. This reference to the snow also recalls the image of Attis’ snowy white hand in line 8 which links it with the motif of sterility, a point strengthened by the use of the word *sterilis* in line 69 (*ego Maenas, ego mei pars, ego vir sterilis ero?*). The whiteness, coldness, and sterility which the snow brings to mind signify Attis’ spiritual isolation, an idea that will be developed in the final colour cluster.

In the final colour cluster of the poem, the green/white conflict is repeated, albeit less strongly:

ferus ipse sese adhortans rapidum incitat animo,  
vadit, fremit, refringit virgulta pede vago.  
at ubi umida **albicans** loca litoris adiit,  
teneramque vidit Attin prope marmora pelagi,  
facit impetum. illa demens fugit in nemora fera;  
ibi semper omne vitae spatium famula fuit.

85–90

As Sandy points out, *virgulta* suggests *viridis*.<sup>78</sup> The lion, in trampling the brushwood with its feet, is physically destroying the greenness of Ida. This greenness is placed in

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. 14.

<sup>75</sup> See line 53 discussed above and line 70 discussed below.

<sup>76</sup> References to snow are not uncommon in literature about the cults of Cybele and Dionysus. Snowstorms appear in two Gallus epigrams (‘Simonides’ 2 and Antipater 64) and there is a reference to snow in the *Bacchae* (661–2). Both cults were, of course, associated with mountain heights.

<sup>77</sup> So Bongì (n. 50), 59. Bongì goes on to compare this line with Callimachus, *Hymn to Diana* 41: *Λευκὸν ἐπὶ Κρηταίων ὄρος κεκομημένον ὕλη*, and Theocritus 11.47–8: *ἔστι ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ, τό μοι ἄ πολυδένδρεος Αἴτνα / λευκᾶς ἐκ χιόνος ποτὸν ἀμβρόσιον προΐητι*. See also Fedeli (n. 29), 51.

<sup>78</sup> Sandy (n. 11), 394: ‘The epithet *viridem* (30) seems to correspond to *virgulta* (86). The two words are not, of course, related, but Catullus’ contemporary Varro provides us with this current etymology, “*virgultum dicitur a viridi*” (5.21.102).’

contrast with the whiteness of the seashore in the following line.<sup>79</sup> Unlike the green/white colour contrast in line 70 where the colour terms are evenly balanced, in this passage the white has finally overcome the green and become the dominant colour element in the passage. This is not only because *virgulta* is less strongly chromatic than *viridis* but because it is set against *albicare* which is the one explicit colour word in the passage, the idea of whiteness being strengthened still further by the use of the word *marmora* in the following line.<sup>80</sup> The focus here is on the sea just as it was in the very first line of the poem (*super alta vectus Attis celeri rate maria*). The sea separates Attis from civilization and from everything he loves; in a similar fashion Catullus depicts Ariadne at 64.52 looking out over the sea after the departing Theseus (*namque fluentisono prospectans litore Diae*). In his description of Ariadne's seascape, however, Catullus focuses on the sound of the waves (*fluentisono litore*), here he focuses on their colour. *Umida albicantis loca litoris* picks up *aethera album* of the central colour cluster (39–41) and carries with it the same overtones of remoteness and distance. These overtones are reinforced by the use of the word *marmor* for, although the sea cannot literally be marble, the word brings to mind ideas of whiteness and coldness (like the snow) and of hardness.<sup>81</sup> This is in contrast to Attis whom Catullus, in the same line, describes as *tener* 'soft', 'delicate'. Thus the final picture we have of Attis is of him standing soft and vulnerable against a vast backdrop of cold, white ocean. Then blackness descends as Attis is plunged into the darkness of the grove: thereafter all colour departs from the poem. The feelings of bleakness and despair that this final colour cluster elicits is hardly surprising, for, as Rubino puts it, in his analysis of C.63:

The dialectic of oppositions presented in that narrative structure turns out to be a false dialectic, for there is no progress toward a new state of 'integration' but only a sort of 'frozen portrait' of unmediated differences.<sup>82</sup>

## CONCLUSION

At the most basic level the colour motifs in C.63 are, like its numerous forms of repetition, a way of drawing the poem together. Catullus' use of colours matches the circular structure of the poem, for colour elements such as white, red, and green are introduced in the first half of the poem to be taken up in the second. However colours do not always recur in the same ways and, as the poem progresses towards its tragic conclusion, the negative associations of the colour groups emerge. This is the case for the blackness of the grove; at the beginning of the poem it had a certain mysterious and sexual quality, but by the end it signified the approach of madness and death. Similarly, white first appears in association with Attis' hand where it carries its common overtones of beauty, delicacy, and softness, but gradually the

<sup>79</sup> The *albicantis loca litoris* is probably an allusion to the white foam of breaking waves, an effect created by the placement of the words *umida* and *albicantis* together and the fact that *albicantis*, the present participle, suggests an ongoing process rather than a state. Virgil employs the cognate verb *albescere* at *Aen.* 7.528 to suggest the appearance of the sea stirred up by the wind.

<sup>80</sup> For the whiteness of marble, see Theoc. 6.38. In Latin verse the adjective *marmoreus*, a cognate of *marmor*, can be employed as a synonym for *albus* or *candidus*. Lucretius employs it in this way at 2.765 *marmoreo fieri possint candore repente*, and 2.774–5 *nam quocumque modo perturbes caerulea quae sint, / numquam in marmoreum possunt migrare colorem*. See also Lenchantin (n. 17), 138.

<sup>81</sup> Compare line 40, discussed above, where the *aether albus* is associated with the hard earth.

<sup>82</sup> Rubino (n. 4), 170.

colour takes on associations with coldness, hardness, and sterility. Thus, like the red/white and purple/white motifs in C.64,<sup>83</sup> the colour imagery contributes to the tragic atmosphere of the poem, reflecting Attis' growing sense of dislocation and alienation.

In this poem colours are set against one another to produce a number of effects. The clash of colours (light against dark, red against white, green against white) generates a sense of tension that is never resolved, with the final polarization of white against black (the whiteness of the shore and the blackness of the grove) underlining the irrevocable nature of Attis' decision and the futility of his rebellion. Catullus also frequently heightens the impact of these colour contrasts by associating them with other contrasting sensations (warmth, cold, softness, hardness) in a form of synaesthesia. This increases the reader's identification with the possessed worshipper who, in his state of sensory stimulation, not only sees things more keenly but for whom barriers between the senses are breaking down. At the same time by rendering many of these images ambivalent (the sun in lines 39–40 is both golden and harsh, Mount Ida in line 70 is at once green and full of snow) Catullus suggests the confusion in Attis' mind and the distortion of his thought-processes. Thus by his use of colours to achieve *ἐνάργεια* (with all their power to evoke a scene and arouse an emotional response) Catullus is able to bring the exotic and un-Roman cultural experience of the Galli within the grasp of the ordinary Roman reader.<sup>84</sup> Indeed Catullus is so skilful in this technique that he enables the reader to feel not just a spectator but a participant in the action.

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<sup>83</sup> See n. 53.

<sup>84</sup> In his use of *ἐνάργεια* to bring about this end Catullus can be compared with ancient historians such as Thucydides and Livy who, A. Feldherr argues, make use of it to bridge the gap between present and past by making their audiences' experience approximate those of their ancestors: *Spectacle and Society in Livy's History* (Berkeley, 1998), 8, 11.