

ARCTOS

ACTA PHILOLOGICA FENNICA

VOL. XXX

HELSINKI 1996 HELSINGFORS

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GAIUS RABIRIUS POSTUMUS: A ROMAN FINANCIER AND CAESAR'S POLITICAL ALLY*

MARY SIANI-DAVIES

Gaius Rabirius Postumus is largely known to history because of one speech delivered in his defence by Cicero in 54/53 BC. Within *Pro Rabirio Postumo* rhetorical expediency and political necessity prompt Cicero to cast his client as a man of little more than mediocre attainments, a mere equestrian banker whose only moment of transient glory was as a bit part player in the complicated imbroglios surrounding the Egyptian king Ptolemy XII Auletes.¹ But what is the truth behind this rhetorical and legalistic smokescreen? In this article I would like to suggest that the Gaius Rabirius Postumus of Cicero's speech is also a) the man referred to as Curtius, Postumus or Curtius Postumus in Cicero's correspondence, b) the Postumus mentioned in a newly discovered papyrological fragment, c) the proconsul Gaius Rabirius of the Delos inscription, d) the Postumius of Appian's narrative of the civil war and e) the Rabirius Postumus of Caesar's account of the African war. The aim of this prosopographical exercise is both to pull together facts which have long been established, but are vexingly scattered or unexplored, as well as to present a fresh evaluation of Postumus' career, not only as a remarkably successful Roman entrepreneur, but also as a public figure of considerable standing, and a political ally of Caesar who can be ranked alongside those termed by Gelzer his 'cabinet ministers': Gaius Pansa, Aulus Hirtius, Cornelius Balbus, Gaius Oppius and Gaius Matius.²

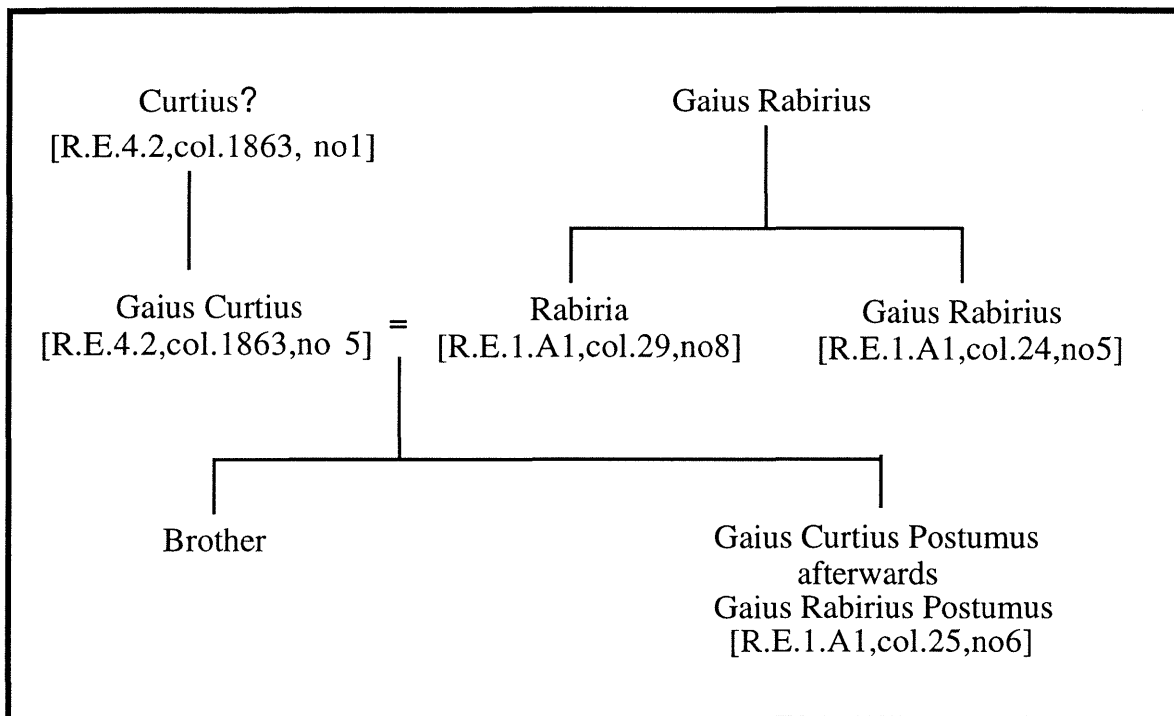
By resolving the onomastic confusion that has surrounded references

* I wish to express my gratitude to Professors Herwig Maehler, Heikki Solin and Olli Salomies and Mr. John Carter for kindly reading drafts of this article and making a number of pertinent suggestions. I am also grateful to the British Council for financing a visit to the "Institutum Classicum" (University of Helsinki) which aided the research for this article.

¹ Cic. Rab. Post. 23.

² M. Gelzer, *Caesar, Politician and Statesman*, Oxford 1968, 273.

to Postumus³ in the sources and re-evaluating old and new epigraphic material this article, in particular, sheds new light on: a) the identity of Postumus' father and his fate together with the implications of this for Postumus' *cognomen*, b) the breadth and scale of Postumus' business activities, both in Italy and abroad, as measured by the geographic distribution of amphoras bearing his stamp and inscriptions referring to his many freedmen and women, c) his activities as *dioecetes* in Alexandria after the restoration of Ptolemy XII Auletes, d) the extent of Caesar's financial involvement in the Egyptian venture and, in particular, his relations with Postumus after the latter's appointment as *dioecetes*, and finally, e) the date of Postumus' proconsulship in Asia.



³ In order to aid comprehension from the outset I would like to make it clear that in all cases, whatever the actual name used in the sources, when I believe that the person in question is C. Rabirius Postumus, I will refer to him simply as Postumus in the text with the name found in the sources being given in brackets in the note.

Gaius Rabirius Postumus was the son of Gaius Curtius and Rabiria and, probably, first bore the name Gaius Curtius [Postumus].⁴ He seems to have had at least one elder brother, who was rumoured to have met an untimely and slightly suspicious end, since during the trial of Postumus' uncle on his mother's side, C. Rabirius, Cicero, who acted for his defence, mentions an old allegation that his client was accused of murdering his nephew—the brother of Postumus.⁵ This charge was levelled at a time when C. Curtius, the father of Postumus, was on trial, with the prosecution claiming that the death in the family had been used as an excuse to postpone legal proceedings, but, as Cicero relates in dismissing the accusation, it is difficult to believe that an uncle would be more attached to his brother-in-law than his nephew.

The family into which Postumus was born was of solid equestrian stock. His father, C. Curtius, is described by Cicero, who avers that he knew him from his youth, as a most valiant leader of the equestrian order and an eminent *publicanus* who engaged in tax-farming and money-lending.⁶ Other members of what appears to have been the same or a related family, the Curtii Postumi, seem to have been of sufficient importance for Verres to have bribed them to gain their political support in his bid for the praetorship, and it would seem possible that C. Curtius, the father of Postumus, was also to be numbered amongst those businessmen powerful enough to influence political decisions.⁷ Little else is known for certain about C. Curtius' career except that at one time he was arraigned for embezzling public funds and burning public archives, and, although the circumstances surrounding this trial remain unclear, from two similar cases involving arson attacks on targets of the same nature, it

⁴ Cic. Rab. Perd. 8; Rab. Post. 45; RE 1A1, col. 25, no 6; H. Dessau, "Gaius Rabirius Postumus", *Hermes* 46 (1911) 613-20; *idem* "Gaius Rabirius Postumus", *Hermes* 47 (1913) 320.

⁵ Cic. Rab. Perd. 8. It is not certain that this brother was older, but given the fact that Postumus was said never to have seen his father's face (Rab. Post. 4) it must be presumed that any other child was born before him.

⁶ Cic. Rab. Post. 3, 45; RE 4.2, cols 1863-1864, nos 5 and 6. Cicero presumably met Postumus' father after his move to Rome in 96, when he was ten years old, see Cic. Leg. 1.13; Brut. 303.

⁷ Cic. 2Ver. 1.100, 102, 158; for details on the exact order of the names see below n. 11, and for the Curtii Postumi being listed amongst other successful businessmen see C.T. Barlow, *Bankers, Moneylenders, and Interest Rates in the Roman Republic*, Diss., Chapel Hill, NC 1978, 208.

seems that such drastic action was usually only taken in a desperate effort to destroy evidence of bad debts or, perhaps, criminal activities such as forgery.⁸ The date of the trial is unknown, although, since it is mentioned during the trial of C. Rabirius in 63, it must have occurred before that date, and Cicero also tells us that C. Curtius was honourably acquitted because of his impeccable character.⁹

It has often been suggested that Postumus was given the *cognomen* 'Postumus' because he was born after his father's death, the evidence coming from a passage in *Pro Rabirio Postumo* in which Cicero states that his client had never seen his father.¹⁰ However, set against this argument there is evidence that 'Postumus' was a name associated with the Curtii family, since two contemporaries of C. Curtius, Q. Curtius Postumus (a juror) and Cn. Curtius Postumus, bore the same appellation, and it would seem likely that these two individuals, as members of the Curtii Postumi family, were probably related to Postumus.¹¹ A careful study of the

⁸ Cic. Rab. Perd. 8. For the trials of an *eques*, Quintus Sossius, who confessed to the crime of burning the *tabularium*, and that of Lucius Alenus, who committed the same act because he forged the handwriting of six senior treasury clerks, see Nat. Deor. 3.74; W.B. Tyrrell, *A Legal and Historical Commentary on Cicero's Oratio Pro Rabirio Perduellionis Reo*, Amsterdam 1978, 66-67.

⁹ For C. Curtius and his impeccable character see Cic. Rab. Perd. 8; the C. Curtius of the MSS is generally accepted as being C. Curtius.

¹⁰ Cic. Rab. Post. 4. Amongst those who suggest that Postumus was named 'Postumus' on account of his birth are Dessau, "Gaius", 614 (as in n. 4), P. Guiraud, *Études économiques sur l'antiquité*, 2nd ed., Paris 1905, 205, C. Nicolet, *L'ordre équestre à l'époque républicaine (312-43 av. J.-C.)*, 2 vols, Paris 1966-1974, 2.1000 and I. Kajanto, *The Latin Cognomina*, Helsinki 1965, 295. Ancient authors testify to the importance of personal names obtained from the 'circumstances of birth', see Quint. 1.4.25; Varr. L. L. 9.60-62 ' . . . qui post patris mortem, Postumus'; Plin. Nat. 7.150.

¹¹ Cic. 2Ver. 1.100, 102, 158. The standard reading 'cum Q. et Cn. Postumis Curtiis' is in fact an emendation by Ps-Asconius of the original MS which read 'Q. Q. Postumus Curtus', see T. Stangl, *Ciceronis Orationum Scholiastae*, 2 vols., Leipzig 1912, 2.247. The order of the names 'Postumi Curtii' here is rather puzzling, because inversion of a name and a surname was customary only if the *praenomen* was not stated. Here, however, Cicero seems to have inverted them despite the presence of a *praenomen*; for possible interpretations see Nicolet, *L'ordre équestre*, 2.861, 1000 (as in n. 10) and D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *Onomasticon to Cicero's Speeches*, Cambridge, Mass. 1988, 43. A recently discovered and as yet unpublished inscription ('Q. CURT. POST. L. NOEUS' and 'CURTIA Q. L. SERAPIAS') also attests to the status of the Curtii Postumi, as two freedmen, a man and a woman, both bear the name of one of the members of the family—I would like to thank Professor Gian Luca Gregori of the University of Rome for drawing my attention to this inscription. 'Postumus' was an ancient *praenomen* which became more

language used by Cicero in *Pro Rabirio Postumo* also raises some doubts as to the fate of Postumus' father. It is striking that Cicero instead of explicitly referring to his death chooses a more equivocal form of words when he declares that the young Postumus had never laid eyes on his father (*quamvis patrem numquam viderat*), with this ambiguity being further accentuated by the rare employment of *quamvis* with the indicative *viderat* conveying hypothetical overtones which would not otherwise be present if the more emphatically objective *quamquam* had been employed.¹² Could it be that the young Postumus did not know his father for reasons other than his death and that he took the *cognomen* 'Postumus' from another prominent branch of his agnatic family, the Curtii Postumi, perhaps in order to shun some dishonour associated with his father's name?¹³ Nothing is known for certain, but a single source provides the grounds for a tentative suggestion that C. Curtius may have been forced into exile at the time of his son's birth or shortly afterwards.

This evidence can be found in correspondence addressed by Cicero in 45 to his staunch friend and at the time legate in Etruria, Q. Valerius Orca, concerning land holdings in Volaterrae.¹⁴ Since the time of Sulla the Volaterrans had been left in a precarious position *vis à vis* their lands, which by law belonged to the state as *ager publicus*.¹⁵ Several times over the intervening years proposals had been made to redistribute the lands, and when in 45 the issue once more came to the fore, Cicero, for political

prominent in the Republican period as a *cognomen*, as in the cases of T. Furfanius Postumus (Cic. Fam. 6.8.3), Q. Seius Postumus (Cic. Dom. 115), L. Servilius Postumus (Cic. Fam. 12.26.1) and many others recorded in CIL I²; see also Kajanto, *Cognomina*, 41, 295 (as in n. 10). On forms of address in the time of Cicero see J.N. Adams, "Conventions of Naming in Cicero", *CQ* (NS) 28 (1978) 165-66.

¹² Cic. Rab. Post. 4; R. Kühner, F. Holzweissig & C. Stegmann, *Ausführliche Grammatik der lateinischen Sprache*, 2 vols., Hannover 1912, 2.443 and E. Pasoli, *Saggi di Grammatica Latina*, 2nd ed., Bologna 1966, 71-75.

¹³ A number of probable analogues to Postumus' case can be found in D.R. Shackleton Bailey, *Two Studies in Roman Nomenclature*, Atlanta, Georgia 1991, 52.

¹⁴ Cic. Fam. 13.4-5; for Q. Valerius Orca's support for Cicero's recall from exile whilst he was *praetor* in 57 see Cic. Red. Sen. 23.

¹⁵ W.V. Harris, *Rome in Etruria and Umbria*, Oxford 1971, 264, 274. Volaterrae's inhabitants were punished with loss of civil rights (unconstitutionally) and confiscation of property (constitutionally) by Sulla because of their long (two years) resistance to his army, see Cic. Dom. 79 and R. Seager, "Sulla", in J.A. Crook, A. Lintott & E. Rawson (eds.), *CAH* 9, Cambridge 1994, 203.

friend Valerius Orca, who seems to have been in charge of assigning property in Volaterrae to Caesar's veterans, asking him on behalf of the whole population of the city to exercise restraint.¹⁶ Then, perhaps because his first appeal fell on deaf ears, Cicero persevered in his request with a second more personal epistle in which he vigorously pleads (*vehementer rogo*) with the legate to show his generosity and understanding and spare, in particular, the property of one C. Curtius on the grounds that if his lands were to be seized he would be unable to support his newly acquired status as a senator, recently granted by none other than Caesar himself.¹⁷

From this letter we learn that this C. Curtius, who seems to have been not of local origins, is an old and very close friend of Cicero and a victim of the Sullan proscriptions who was forced into exile. He appears to have lost almost his entire fortune upon proscription and after his rehabilitation, which was secured with Cicero's help, he had subsequently sunk 'the wreck of his estate' into a property in Volaterrae. However, either because the land purchased by C. Curtius had not been accompanied by a clearly specified title of ownership or because the purchaser had failed to pay the full sum due, his holding appears to have been a target of the land redistributions instituted by Caesar in 45.¹⁸ The identity of this C. Curtius has never been established, but he might have been the son of the man attested in another Ciceronian speech, a professional prosecutor who, although he had already withdrawn from the bar because of old age, still fell victim to the Sullan proscriptions, being killed near the Servilian basin

¹⁶ The cities of Italy and especially Volaterrae staunchly supported Cicero's consulship and toiled hard to bring him back from exile, see Cic. Dom. 28, 75; for the letter see Cic. Att. 1.19.4, and for speculations about its date see D.R. Shackleton Bailey, Cicero, Epistulae ad Familiares, 2 vols, Cambridge 1977, 2.459 where he suggests it was written either after Caesar's return from Spain in September 45 or during his third dictatorship between April 46 and April 45.

¹⁷ Cic. Fam. 13.4.1; Att. 1.19.4; P.A. Brunt, Italian Manpower, 225 B.C - A.D 14, Oxford 1971, 323 and E. Deniaux, "Les recommandations de Cicéron et la colonisation césarienne: les terres de Volterra", Cahiers du Centre G. Glotz 2 (1991) 226f.

¹⁸ For a possible date for this purchase see Brunt, Italian Manpower, 323-25 (as in n. 17) who suggests that it might have fallen after 59, when Caesar had exempted the *ager Volaterranus* from redistribution. The same land had also been under threat of distribution in 63 (Cic. Fam. 13.4.1-2) and 60 (Cic. Att. 1.19.4).

in Rome where the heads of the slain accused were exposed.¹⁹

No further evidence is available as to the identity of Cicero's friend, C. Curtius, but if the known facts are compared enough evidence emerges to allow for a tentative suggestion to be made that this man could have been the father of our Postumus: a) He went into exile at the time of Sulla which is about the time Postumus should have been born, allowing Cicero to make his remark that Postumus had not seen his father. b) He was then an *eques*, the same rank as Postumus' father.²⁰ c) Within the letter Cicero declares that he was an old and very close friend of C. Curtius (*familiarissimus*), having known him since his youth, when he was evidently older. He makes a similar statement regarding his familiarity with Postumus' father in *Pro Rabirio Postumo (pueris nobis)* suggesting that in both cases the man in question was probably at least ten years older than Cicero being born around 116.²¹ d) Although the length of C. Curtius' exile is unknown Cicero seems to have been working for the rehabilitation of some of those who suffered at this time as late as 63.²² If Postumus' father had suffered exile it might help explain the rather unexpected and puzzling assertion by Cicero in the peroration of *Pro Rabirio Postumo* that his client had been particularly attentive to the cause of exiles assisting morally and financially not only Cicero himself but also many others through his 'generosity'.²³ e) C. Curtius seems to have been raised to the senate at an advanced age (he must have been around 70 years old in 45). Why Caesar should choose to bestow such a status on an old and apparently obscure man is difficult to understand, although it has been suggested that special reward was given to members of the families who

¹⁹ For C. Curtius see D.R. Shackleton Bailey, *Cicero's letters to his Friends*, Atlanta, Georgia 1988, 482; *idem*, *Epistulae ad Familiares*, 2.460 (as in n. 16); RE 4.2, col. 1864, no 6; for the father of C. Curtius see Cic. Rosc. Amer. 90; RE 4.2, col. 1863, no 1; F. Hinard, *Les proscriptions de la Rome républicaine*, Rome 1985, 347-48, no. 21 and T.P. Wiseman, *New Men in the Roman Senate, 139 B.C. - A.D.14*, London 1971, 228.

²⁰ Cic. Fam. 13.5.2.

²¹ Note the similarity in expression in Cic. Rab. Post. 3 'nobis pueris' and Fam. 13.5.2 'C. Curtio ab ineunte aetate familiarissime sum usus'.

²² It seems that C. Curtius like other victims of the proscriptions remained excluded from his civil rights until Caesar restored them in 49, see RE 4.2, col. 1864, no 6; R. Syme, "Missing Senators", *Historia* 4 (1955) 61; for Cicero's efforts in 63 see Cic. Fam. 13.4.1f; E.S. Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, Berkeley, Calif. 1974, 276.

²³ Cic. Rab. Post. 47.

had resisted Sulla, and there is no doubt about C. Curtius' impeccable record in this regard. However, added impetus to such a gesture could have been given if C. Curtius was, indeed, the father of a man who by this time was a member of Caesar's inner circle and who himself had recently been raised to the same senatorial status—as is the case with Postumus.²⁴

Whatever the fate of C. Curtius, there is no doubt that Postumus was effectively left fatherless from an early age, and it would seem possible to suggest that he was born sometime in the 80s, giving him an age of around 30 at the time of his trial in 54/53. In the absence of his natural father his mother, Rabiria, may be presumed to have sought the protection of her own family, since Postumus was subsequently to be adopted by her brother—the very uncle, C. Rabirius, who had once been accused of murdering Postumus' brother!²⁵ The date at which Postumus was adopted is unknown, but the trial for *perduellio* of his uncle and adoptive father, C. Rabirius, can serve as a *terminus post quem*. As Cicero makes no reference to the adoption of Postumus in this trial when referring to the allegations of infanticide, which he might have been expected to, if it had occurred, as testimony of the love the uncle felt towards his nephews; it can, therefore, be presumed that the adoption occurred sometime after this trial in 63, but before Postumus' own trial in 54/53, when Cicero explicitly states that Postumus had been adopted.²⁶ Adoption was also an important means of sustaining family networks and preserving family names and, since C. Rabirius seems to have been without an heir, it is likely that he adopted Postumus sometime not long before his death, that is in the years before 54/53, so as to be able to pass to him his estate.²⁷

Upon adoption it was customary for the adoptee to take the names of his adoptive father, and so Postumus took the *praenomem* (although fortuitously this was probably the same as that he had borne since birth,

²⁴ For other examples of the promotion of anti-Sullan campaigners see E. Rawson, "Caesar: Civil War and Dictatorship", in J.A. Crook, A. Lintott & E. Rawson (eds.), CAH 9, Cambridge 1994, 452; Deniaux, 'Les recommandations', 226 (as in n. 17).

²⁵ On C. Rabirius see RE 1A1, col. 24, no 5 and on Rabiria see RE 1A1, col. 29, no 8. Adoption had to be approved and validated by the Pontifices see Cic. Dom. 34-38.

²⁶ Cic. Rab. Perd. 8.

²⁷ Cic Rab. Post. 38, 47.

for both his true and adoptive fathers were called Gaius)²⁸ and the *nomen* of his adoptive father, but as the latter does not seem to have had a *cognomen*, he kept the one associated with his agnatic family.²⁹ Thus, from Gaius Curtius [Postumus] he became Gaius Rabirius Postumus, the name by which he was known at his trial in 54/53. After adoption the adoptee was expected to use his new legal name on formal occasions, such as court-cases and in official documentation, but in everyday life it was common for him to retain his old name, often until he died.³⁰ In the same way, Postumus seems to have continued to use and be addressed by both his old and new adoptive names concurrently—usage being dependent on circumstances. On formal occasions, such as at his trial, his full adoptive name, C. Rabirius Postumus, was used, although even here it is noticeable that Cicero only addresses his client at the beginning of his speech as C. Rabirius and at the very end as C. Rabirius Postumus, but otherwise throughout refers to him twenty other times as Postumus—a clear sign of intimacy. In his political life Postumus seems to have also used the official form of his name as its association with his uncle's name and status—he was a senator—would have been greatly beneficial to his aspirations in this domain. A later inscription bears the name C. Rabirius and contemporary histories also refer to him as C. Rabirius and Rabirius Postumus.³¹ At all other times both in business, where he was perhaps able to employ a family trading name to good advantage, and in informal usage he seems to have retained his old name of C. Curtius Postumus—and it is noticeable that this is also the name carried by all his freedmen and women, bar one, probably on account of the domestic and commercial environments in which they

²⁸ The natural father's *praenomen* was traditionally given to the first born son with later sons receiving different *praenomina*, but as in this case the eldest son had died, Postumus bore the *praenomen* of his father, see O. Salomies, *Die römischen Vornamen, Studien zur römischen Namengebung*, Helsinki 1987, 204f, esp. 209f.

²⁹ R. Syme, "Clues to Testamentary Adoption", *Roman Papers* 4 (1988) 159–60; A. Watson, *The Law of Persons in the Later Roman Republic*, Oxford 1967, 82–88.

³⁰ Cicero after the adoption of his close friend, T. Pomponius Atticus, by his uncle, Q. Caecilius, in 58, continued to address him in his letters by the familiar 'T. Pomponius' rather than by his new name 'Q. Caecilius Atticus', and his freedmen also carried both versions of his name, see *Cic. Att.* 3.20, 22, 23, 7.7, 31, 9.6; *Nep. Att.* 5.2; *Val. Max.* 7.8.5; Dessau, "Gaius", 615 (as in n. 4); Adams, 'Conventions', 159–60 (as in n. 11).

³¹ See below pp. 223, 238.

had served.³² Particularly in his letters, just as in the case of Atticus, Cicero, as would be only natural with an old friend of the family, continued to refer to Postumus as Curtius Postumus, Curtius or sometimes just plain Postumus.³³

Postumus' adoptive father, C. Rabirius, seems to have been active in politics since early youth when he was still an eques. In particular, he seems to have belonged to a group of knights who were known for their fervent hostility to the political demagogue of that time, Lucius Appuleius Saturninus, and the reforms he instituted as the tribune of the people in 103 and 100. Saturninus had been brutally slain during his last year of office, and in particularly strange circumstances thirty-seven years later, in 63, C. Rabirius was brought to trial accused of his murder.³⁴ Although C. Rabirius is best known from this trial, *Pro Rabirio Perduellionis Reo*, he, in fact, already seems to have been tried and cleared of the same charge on a previous occasion, and his trial in 63 appears to have been part of an attempt by Caesar, amongst others, to curb the powers of the senate, to

³² A *tessera nummularia* bearing the name of Postumus found in Rome and dating from the consulship of D. Silanus and L. Murena in 62, given our Postumus' age at that time and the usage of the name 'Rabirius' in a commercial context, possibly refers to his uncle and adoptive father C. Rabirius, see CIL I² 911 = ILLRP 1026 'Flaccus/ Rabiri (servus)/ sp(ectavit) K(alendis) Apr(ilibus)/ D. Sil(ano), L. Mur(ena); for Postumus' freedmen see below pp. 220, 225.

³³ Dessau, "Gaius", 616-17 (as in n. 4); for Atticus see O. Salomies, *Adoptive and Polyonymous Nomenclature in the Roman Empire*, Helsinki 1992, 9-10. These multiple usages of name have hampered efforts to trace the career of Postumus with references to him within the Ciceronian corpus sometimes being erroneously attributed to a lesser figure, M. Curtius, who makes a brief appearance in two of Cicero's letters asking to be recommended to Caesar for the military tribunate of 54, see Cic. Q.fr. 2.14.3; 3.1.10; RE 4.2, col. 1869, no 26. The principal proponent of this false identification was Frank (T. Frank, "Tulliana", AJP 41 (1920) 278-80) with contrary opinions being voiced by Dessau and Sumner. Shackleton Bailey also now inclines to the latter view. M. Curtius is only known from these two letters from which it becomes clear that Cicero did not know him personally, but was merely responding to a request from his brother, Quintus, who asked him to recommend the young man to Caesar. If this M. Curtius had been a member of the Curtii Postumi family he surely would have written to Cicero directly without recommendation from Quintus since Cicero knew at least one branch of the family very well through Postumus and Postumus' father, see G.V. Sumner, "The 'Lex Annalis' under Caesar", Phoenix 25 (1971) 254; D. R. Shackleton Bailey, "On Cicero, Ad Familiares", Philologus 105 (1961) 81; *idem*, *Cicero's Letters to Atticus* (7 vols, Cambridge, 1965-1970), 4.361; *idem*, *Roman Nomenclature*, 21 (as in n. 13).

³⁴ Cic. Rab. Perd. 31; Serv. ad Aen. 1.13; Dio 37.26.3; Aurel. Vict. vir. ill. 73.12; MRR, 2.495.

which C. Rabirius had been raised in the meantime, and particularly the rights conferred on magistrates by a *senatus consultum ultimum*.³⁵ C. Rabirius was defended by Cicero at his trial in 63 and, indeed, the two seem to have been old friends possibly from as early as 89, when they may have served together in Cn. Pompeius Strabo's army, Cicero as a *tiro* and C. Rabirius as a *tribunus militum*.³⁶ From Cicero's speech *Pro Rabirio Perduellionis Reo* it can be inferred that throughout his life C. Rabirius continued to play an active role in public life, and it might be presumed that his activities impinged on the young Postumus who during his formative years may well have had the opportunity to meet many of the leading political figures of the day. Several times C. Rabirius faced trial in the courts, once in 73, when he was accused by a C. Macer of violating sacred groves and shrines, on which charge he was apparently acquitted, and again when he was arraigned for violating the law of Fabius by detaining another man's slaves and that of Porcius by killing Roman citizens. On this latter occasion Cicero stresses that the people of Campania and Apulia rose to his aid not 'from neighbourly feeling' but out of real 'enthusiasm' and 'goodwill', and this may be taken as some indication that C. Rabirius' estates within these areas were such as to allow him to wield sufficient influence to establish his own *fides*.³⁷ Like many well-to-do Romans C. Rabirius also seems to have owned a house in Naples, because it was presumably his property Cicero was alluding to when he wrote to Atticus in November 68 telling him that C. Rabirius' house in the city, which Atticus had in mind, had unfortunately been sold to somebody else.³⁸

We do not know when C. Rabirius died, but it must have been some

³⁵ The murder of Saturninus was given legal sanction by a *senatus consultum ultimum*, see Cic. Rab. Perd. 18, 31; for more on the legal issues see Cic. Att. 2.1.3; Orat.102; Quint. Inst. 7.1.9, 16; Suet. Jul. 12; on the political implications see Dio 37.26.1-3, 27.2, 37.2; Gruen, Last Generation, 277-79 (as in n. 22). An unknown writer of the fourth century A.D (Aurel. Vict. vir. ill. 73.12) also records that 'a certain senator called Rabirius carried the head of Saturninus round the dinner table as a joke'.

³⁶ For Cicero being a *tiro* and an old friend of C. Rabirius see Cic. Rab. Perd. 2 'amicitiae vetustas'; Phil. 12.27; for C. Rabirius see N. Criniti, L' Epigrafe di Asculum di Gn. Pompeo Strabone, Milan 1970, 116-17; AE, 1912, no. 126 'C. Rabeiri(us) C.f Galer(ia tribu)', MRR, 2.35, 38 n. 15, 495 and Wiseman, New Men, 255, no 353 (as in n. 19).

³⁷ Cic. Rab. Perd. 7-8; for the date of the first trial see RE 1A1, col. 24, no 5 and W. Drumann & P. Groebe, Geschichte Roms, 6 vols, Leipzig 1899-1929, 6.207.

³⁸ Cic. Att. 1.6.1.

time before 54/53, because at the time of his trial Postumus had not only inherited his handsome and profitable estate to put alongside some lands of his father, but had also according to Cicero considerably augmented his fortune. However, Postumus' wealth was not just based on these estates since he seems to have been one of the most prominent merchants and financiers of his day. Cicero's description of his activities in *Pro Rabirio Postumo* reveals an active *publicanus* who 'accomplished much, his business interests were extensive, his shares in public contracts were numerous, he acted as a banker to states, his financial transactions criss-crossed many provinces, he also offered his services to kings.'³⁹ Some evidence of the extent of Postumus' trading interests comes from a number of amphoras found throughout the Mediterranean bearing an abbreviation of the name 'Postumus Curtius' stamped on their handles. These are normally associated with Postumus and given his known trading interests understandably so. The inversion of the order of the *nomen* and *cognomen* in his 'trade mark' (POST CURT) does seem to conform with the growing trend at the time, because, by then, the *cognomen* often took the place the *praenomen*, especially if the latter was not stated, as a means of making the first element in a man's nomenclature as particularly distinctive and significant as the other elements.⁴⁰ It could also be that Postumus chose to continue to trade under an old family logo for purely commercial reasons. The handles are in the style of the Dr(essel) 2-4 amphoras, those called Brindisi, found particularly in Delos and Alexandria. It has also been suggested that these amphoras may have been produced in the workshop of Pullus at Ugentum in the Salentini area of southern Apulia and that their main function was the carrying of wine.⁴¹

³⁹ Cic. Rab. Post. 4, 38, 45; for his wealth see Guiraud, *Études économique*, 204-40 (as in n. 10); Nicolet, *L'ordre équestre*, 860 (as in n. 10); I. Shatzman, "The Egyptian Question in Roman Politics 59-54 BC", *Latomus* 30 (1971) 395; J. Andraeu, *La vie financière dans le monde romain: les métiers de manieurs d'argent (IVe siècle av. J.-C - IIIe siècle ap. J.-C)*, Paris 1987, 33, 38, 41, 250-51, 428 n. 135, 643, 647.

⁴⁰ Adams, 'Conventions', 165-66 (as in n. 11); H.L. Axtell, "Men's Names in the Writing;s of Cicero", *CP* 10 (1915) 392; T.P. Wiseman, "Pulcher Claudius", *HSCPh* 74 (1970) 212 and R. Syme, "Imperator Caesar: A Study in Nomenclature", *Historia* 7 (1958) 172-74.

⁴¹ A. Hesnard, "Un dépôt augustéen d' amphores à la Longarina, Ostie", in J.H. D' Arms & E.C. Kopff (eds.), *The Seaborne Commerce of Ancient Rome: Studies in Archaeology and History*, Rome 1980, 143-44 and D.P.S. Peacock & D.F. Williams, *Amphorae and the Roman Economy*, London 1986, 17.

And, indeed, since Postumus had connections with Apulia on both his mother and adoptive father's side, it seems quite likely that he had his amphoras produced and stamped with his own seal at the local kiln at Ugentum.⁴² He appears to have owned his own vineyards and Tchernia in his study of wine production in Italy places his holdings on a par with those of M. Aemilius Lepidus, Pompey, L. Marcius Libo, P. Sestius and L. Cornelius Lentulus Crus, all of whom held sufficient status and estates producing enough wine to warrant amphoras being produced with their stamp.⁴³ Amphora handles bearing Postumus' stamp have been found in various parts of southern Italy including Syracuse, Paestum and Taranto, but also as far afield as Alexandria and Fayum in Egypt.⁴⁴ The three stamped amphora handles discovered in Egypt are identical to those found in Italy suggesting that they come from the same kiln and were probably used for the transportation of wine. They may either be regarded as further evidence of Postumus' extensive commercial activities or be somehow connected with his presence in that country following the

⁴² Cic. Rab. Perd. 7-8; M.H. Callender, *Roman Amphorae*, London 1965, 214, no. 1371 wrongly attributes them to M. Curtius (see above n. 33), whereas L. Criscuolo, *Bolli di anfora greci e romani*, La collezione dell' Università Cattolica di Milano, Bologna 1982, 131 strongly disagrees with such an identification.

⁴³ For Postumus' wine production see A. Tchernia, *Le vin de l' Italie romaine*, Rome 1986, 117 n. 234, 129; see also D. Manacorda, "Le anfore dell' Italia repubblicana: aspetti economici e sociali", in *Amphores romaines et histoire économique. Dix ans de recherche*, Rome 1989, 451.

⁴⁴ For the handle found in Syracuse with the abbreviation 'POST CURT'—the letters ST and RT forming a monogram—see CIL I² 2340a = ILLRP 1184 = CIL X 8051, 26; for the one found in Paestum with the stamp 'POS CUR' see CIL I² 2340b = CIL X 8042, 130 = Callender, 1965, 214, no. 1371 (as in n. 42); for the double handle found in Taranto, near St. Lucia, with the stamp 'POST CUR' in the middle of the lower part of the handle and 'DI' in the middle of its upper part, see CIL I² 2340c and Criscuolo, *Bolli di anfora*, 131 nos 194 and 199 (as in n. 42). For the suggestion that the monogram 'DI' may be the initials of a slave called Diphilus see Manacorda, "Le anfore", 455-57 (as in n. 43), Callender, *Roman Amphorae*, 214, no. 1371 (as in n. 42) and Andreau, *La vie financière*, 486-506 (as in n. 39). Another handle also found in Taranto bears the same abbreviation 'POST CUR' and the letters Π and A in ligature on its double handle - a possible abbreviation for a slave named Appeles, see Manacorda, "Le anfore", 457 (as in n. 43).

restoration of Ptolemy XII Auletes.⁴⁵

Some indications of the high status of Postumus also come from the large number of freedmen and women who bear his full name with inscriptions found in and around Rome testifying to his manumission of a lady called Helena and a number of men including Phileros, Bello, Hermodorus, Helenus, Dicaeus and M. Hordeonius, the latter apparently being in the service of both Postumus and M. Hordeonius. It has also been suggested that the textual critic, Nicias of Cos, known from Cicero's letters and whom Suetonius called 'Curtius Nicias' might be associated with Postumus who was active in the eastern lands and possibly possessed a property in Cos, where Nicias was either a slave or a freedman's son.⁴⁶ The presence of a freedman of Postumus in Ephesus may also be an indication of the breadth of his commercial (and perhaps political) interests. In a letter dated sometime between 46-44 addressed to the proconsul of the province of Asia, Servilius Isauricus, Cicero asks him for his assistance in the case of a freedman, C. Curtius Mithres, who lives in Ephesus and whose ex-master, Postumus, is an intimate friend of Cicero. The freedman in question seems to have been implicated in a dispute over some property in the country with a certain citizen of Colophon.⁴⁷ Perhaps this freedman assisted Postumus in Asia and was left behind to look after

⁴⁵ For a yellow-reddish single handled amphora with the stamp 'POS CUR' see E. Breccia, *Rapport sur la marche du service du Musée pendant l' exercice 1919-1920*, Alexandria 1921, 53 n. 282, and for a double handled one (P. 11603 Alexandria Museum) see J.-Y. Empereur, "Timbres amphoriques de Crocodilopolis-Arsinoé", *Bulletin. Institut Français d' Archéologie Orientale* 77 (1977) 197-233.

⁴⁶ For Helena see CIL X 1088, 122 and CIL XI 3328 'Curtia Postumi l. / Helena/Theocritae Per Se F/Matri et Patri'; for Phileros see CIL VI 38267(D), 'C. Curtius Postumi l. Phileros'; for Bello see CIL VI 17913 'C. Curtio Postumi l. Belloni'; for Dicaeus see CIL VI 38266 'C. Curtius Post. l. Dicaeus' and Dessau, "Gaius", 618 n. 1 (as in n. 4); for Hordeonius see CIL VI 24896; and for Nicias see Cic. Att. 7.3.10, 12.26.2; Suet. Gramm. 14; E. Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic*, London 1985, 71-72; R. Syme, "Who was Vedius Pollio?", *JRS* 51 (1961) 25 and Shackleton Bailey, *Roman Nomenclature*, 35 (as in n. 13); for Hermodorus and Helenus see below pp. 225, 231.

⁴⁷ Cic. Fam. 13.69.1f (name given: Postumus); Χρ. Πελεκίδης, 'Ανέκδοτοι ἐπιγραφαί ἐξ Ἐξ Ἄνδρου καὶ Νάξου, Athens 1969, 13-15 (Naxos) "Ὁ δῆμος / Γάιον Κύρτιον Μίθρηνα / ἀρετῆς ἔνεκεν / καὶ εὐνοίας τῆς εἰς αὐτόν.' (I am grateful to Professor Olli Salomies of the Institutum Classicum at the University of Helsinki for this reference); J. Reynolds, "Roman Inscriptions, 1971-1975", *JRS* 66 (1976) 197; Shackleton Bailey, *Roman Nomenclature*, 21, 82 (as in n. 13); *idem*, *Epistulae ad Familiares*, 2.450 (as in n. 16).

his business interests in the province.

However, it was as a financier that Postumus was really to make his name, since he was a lender to many of the most prominent figures of his day, including none other than the king of Egypt, Ptolemy XII Auletes. This last relationship was to be particularly significant in Postumus' life, as it marked an important step on his journey from back room financier to the centre of the political stage. The first known dealings between the two men stem from 59, when in search of recognition as a friend and ally of Rome, the king borrowed heavily from a number of Roman financiers, including Postumus, in order to provide the funds needed to secure the senate's decree and pay the 6,000 talents promised to Caesar.⁴⁸ With the king's recognition secured Postumus and the others financiers must have expected to rapidly recoup their money and also make a substantial profit from the interest on the loans, but such hopes were soon to be dashed, when less than a year later, the king was forced to flee his kingdom for Rome, where he arrived in autumn 58.⁴⁹ For the king Rome was a haven of safety and a potential springboard for the reclamation of his throne, but in order to succeed in this objective he had to win over the senate to his cause. To achieve this, he resorted to extensive bribery, raising the money through further heavy borrowing from Postumus and other financiers, with the contracts for these loans being signed at Pompey's Alban villa.⁵⁰ The king had established his headquarters at the villa and it is possible to see Pompey as the main motive force behind the events at this stage, although later from *Pro Rabirio Postumo* it seems that a role can also be ascribed to Caesar, if only as one of the main financial backers.⁵¹ Rather than as an independent actor it is probably best to see Postumus as an agent in the coming drama, and as the chief financier funding Ptolemy XII Auletes it can be assumed that he was at least privy to some of the *triumvirs'* plans. Indeed, given the sums of money needed and the risky nature of the operation it seems likely that they furnished some form of financial or political guarantee which allowed Postumus to set about raising the necessary money with the assurance that repayment would ultimately occur, since it soon became clear that reimbursement could not

⁴⁸ Dio 39.12.1; Suet. Jul. 54.

⁴⁹ Cic. Rab. Post. 7.

⁵⁰ Cic. Rab. Post. 7; Fam. 7.17.1; Dio 39.14.3-4; Strabo 17.1.11 (796).

⁵¹ Cic. Rab. Post. 41f.

be secured unless the king was safely restored to his throne by a military expedition.⁵² For a number of months fierce debate raged in the senate as they searched for a competent and trustworthy individual suitable to mount such a difficult expedition. Indeed, so divisive was the debate with the views being so entrenched on all sides that the situation in Rome eventually reached a stalemate allowing Pompey, more secure in his political position following renewal of the triumviral cooperation at the conference of Luca in April 56, to sponsor the restoration through his protégé, the proconsul of Syria, Aulus Gabinius. The main inducement for the latter, despite Cicero's contention in *Pro Rabirio Postumo* that Gabinius had received legal authorisation for such an operation, was in reality a huge bribe of 10,000 talents promised by the king.

Meanwhile, following the brutal murder of envoys sent to Rome by his opponents in Alexandria, Ptolemy XII Auletes had felt it diplomatic to move to Ephesus and it seems probable that it was to meet him that Postumus hurriedly departed from Rome sometime in summer 56.⁵³ Dio records that it was Ptolemy XII Auletes who handed in person a confidential message from Pompey to Gabinius and, in the absence of any reference to the king returning from Ephesus to Italy during this period, it has been suggested that it might have been Postumus who was entrusted with carrying this missive; he would have met the king somewhere *en route* between Ephesus and Gabinius' camp, which according to the sources at this time lay across the Euphrates, as he was preparing to march on Parthia.⁵⁴ A combination of the king's enticements and perhaps promises of protection from Pompey were sufficient to persuade the proconsul to change his plans and march on Egypt, where he met the Egyptian army in battle at Pelusium in October 56. The usurper Archelaus was killed and by January/February 55 Ptolemy XII Auletes had been restored to his throne

⁵² Cic. Rab. Post. 25, 38, 39; Fam. 7.17.1.

⁵³ For the king's move to Ephesus see Dio 29.16.3, 39.16.3, 55.1; Cic. Fam. 1.1.1; Att. 15.15.2, Har. 28; for the murder of the envoys see Dio 39.13.1; Cic. Cael. 23-24, 51; Har. 34; and for Postumus' departure see Rab. Post. 21.

⁵⁴ Dio 39.56.3; for the suggestion that Postumus acted as a courier see R.S. Williams, "The Role of Amicitia in the Career of A. Gabinius (Cos 58 B.C.)", *Phoenix* 32 (1978) 207 n. 53; for Gabinius' location see Dio 39.56.3-4; Strabo 12.3.34 (558); Jos. A. J. 14.98; B. J. 1.179.

in Alexandria.⁵⁵

With the mission to restore the king successfully accomplished the Roman financiers set about trying to recoup their loans with Postumus arriving in person in Alexandria at the head of a delegation of fellow creditors. Cicero gives a graphic impression of the times when he speaks of other bankers arriving in Alexandria waving contracts in their hands.⁵⁶ The amount of money that they sought was considerable, being at least part of Gabinius' 10,000 talents, the outstanding loans made by Postumus and his banking associates including Caesar and Pompey, and the money invested by the creditors after the *senatus consultum* of 57 on the expectation that Lentulus would restore the king.⁵⁷ It must soon have become clear that the contents of the Egyptian treasury would not be sufficient to meet such demands and that the money gathering operation would be lengthy and complex. To facilitate the process Postumus, as the leading financier with the largest investments at stake in Egypt, was according to Cicero appointed to the official post of *dioecetes*, the chief royal treasurer, a title which, whilst it may have legalised all his money-gathering activities, at the same time was also to render his presence in Alexandria highly precarious.⁵⁸ Whether the post was willingly conceded or not is not clear, but the presence of a contingent of Gabinius' army, which was left behind ostensibly to safeguard the king, would have exerted considerable leverage on the monarch. Once in his new post Postumus seems to have set about his task with a vengeance for, although his appointment is not attested in any extant contemporary account, a recently discovered papyrus describes the rapacious activities of a man named Πόστομος during his time of office - presumably as *dioecetes*.

[Πόστομος· λαβὼν γὰρ

[τὴν ἀρχ]ῆν τοὺς μὲν ἐξ ἀρχῆς καθεσ-

[ταμέ]νους καὶ τοὺς ἀπὸ πατέρων

... when Postumus was in charge

he replaced the people who had usually been

appointed and had traditionally succeeded their

⁵⁵ For the date of Ptolemy XII Auletes' restoration see my forthcoming article in *Historia*, 'Ptolemy XII Auletes and the Romans'.

⁵⁶ Cic. Rab. Post. 39; Fam. 7.17.1.

⁵⁷ Cic. Rab. Post. 21, 22, 24, 29, 41; Pis. 49; Plut. Ant. 3.2, 4; Appian Syr. 51; Dio 39.55-56; Schol. Bob. Arch. 9 (177) and Pl. 86 (168); Jos. A. J. 14.98-99; B. J. 1.175.

⁵⁸ Cic. Rab. Post. 22, 39.

[καὶ π]άππων διαδεδεγμένους τὰς	fathers and grandfathers in the office.
[τάξ]εις μετέστησεν, κατέστησεν	Instead, he appointed
[δὲ ἀ]νεπιτηδείους καὶ ἀπεγνωσμέ-	unsuitable and boorish men
[νου]ς, πωλήσας τὰ πάντα τὸν χρό-	after he had sold everything
νον [δια]π[ε]φυλαγμένα· ἐγ δὲ τούτοις,	saved over the years; and among these measures,
συντά[ξας] τοὺς μὲν χρησίμους καὶ ὠφελι-	he ordered that the most useful and efficient
μωτ[άτου]ς τῶν διοι[κη]τῶν μετασταθῆναι,	of dioecetes should be replaced,
ἐφ' ἀρπαγῆν....vacat	with the intention of plunder...

(P. Med. Inv. 68.53)

This fragment would seem to be the first confirmation of Postumus' presence as *dioecetes* in Alexandria, independent of Cicero's assertion in *Pro Rabirio Postumo* because, although his name is not given in full, the content and spirit of the document, which is heavily critical of his activities, strongly points to Postumus' period of office in Alexandria.⁵⁹ Written in Greek the fragment tells the story from a purely Egyptian perspective, but the exact nature of the document from which it derives remains unidentified. Could it come from a general history of the period or it is perhaps a *libellus* in the *Acta Alexandrinorum* condemning Postumus' behaviour in Alexandria? Or, was Postumus perhaps implicated in a legal action and this tirade constitutes part of the prosecution speech?⁶⁰

Presumably much of the money owed was seized from the royal treasury and other crown holdings but intriguingly there is also a reference to objects saved over the years being sold (πωλήσας), which suggests an operation of considerable complexity, fully in keeping with Postumus' mercantile background. What was sold is not specified, but

⁵⁹ The content and spirit of this document would make it extremely unlikely that it refers to C. Julius Postumus (AD 45-47), the prefect of Egypt, during Claudius' reign, who is primarily known from the edict of Ti. Julius Alexander; for the career of C. Julius Postumus see R. Bennet, *The prefects of Roman Egypt: 30 B.C - A.D 69*, Michigan 1971, 86-89; P.J. Sijpesteijn, "SB I 5802: A Reedition", *ZPE* 82 (1990) 102.

⁶⁰ C. Balconi, "Rabirio Postumo dioecetes d' Egitto in P. Med. Inv. 68.53?", *Aegyptus* 73 (1993) 1-20; this papyrus can be dated to sometime between the middle of the first century BC and first century AD, and, although its place of origin is uncertain, it is attested that it was found amongst a mixed group of papyri which related to the *nomoi* of Arsinoe and Oxyrynchus. The text of a possible edict containing a list of transfers drawn up by a *strategos* and a royal scribe, which appears on the *verso* of the document, is of a later date and has no relevance to Postumus' case.

Cicero in *Pro Rabirio Postumo* notes rumours of Postumus' ships arriving back in Puteoli laden with papyrus, glass and linen, and so it seems not impossible that this reference may imply stocks of royal monopolies. Slaves also seem to have been seized by the Romans at this time, including Timagenes who was taken as captive by Gabinius but was later freed and achieved some renown as a rhetorician and a man of letters.⁶¹ One of Postumus' freedman, Hermodorus, whose fine tombstone on the Via Appia in Rome dates from 13 BC - 5 AD, also bears a Greek name common in Egypt at the time suggesting that he too may have been enslaved during this period. This conjecture is further supported by the fact that his daughter, Usia Prima, was a priestess of Isis who carried the Sistrum.⁶² The papyrus also laments Postumus' lack of respect for traditional institutions and, particularly, his replacement of the regular office holders who had 'succeeded their fathers and grandfathers' by new boorish and uncouth men. In fact, rather than being purely the work of Postumus, these actions would seem to reflect wholesale changes occurring within the Egyptian élite at this time, because on his restoration Ptolemy XII Auletes seems to have moved with a vengeance against his foes, having his daughter Berenice and many of the most powerful and wealthy members of Alexandrian society killed and removing many others from office and confiscating their estates, presumably to satisfy the requirements of the Romans.⁶³

The success of Postumus' mission is difficult to gauge. The picture of extortionate practices and rapacious behaviour painted in the papyrus

⁶¹ Cic. Rab. Post. 40; for Timagenes, see Suda s.v Timagenes; Plut. Ant. 72.2; Sen. Contr. 10.5.22; Ira 3.23.4f; S. Treggiari, *Roman Freedmen*, Oxford 1969, 123, 223, 246.

⁶² CIL VI 2246 S = ILS 4404 a) 'C. Rabirius Post. l. Hermodorus' b) 'Rabiria Demaris' c) 'Usia Prima sac. Isis', with the annotation 'Sistrum patera'. A photograph of this particularly fine tombstone can be found in D.E.E. Kleiner, *Roman Group Portraiture*, London 1977, 231-32 no. 63 and fig. 63 a, b and c where the bust of a man, a woman and a child—presumably the daughter of the couple—is depicted (for this reference I am indebted to Dr. Susan Walker, Curator of Greek and Roman Antiquities in the British Museum).

⁶³ Strabo 17.1.11 (796); for the seizure of the wealth of courtiers see Dio 39.58.3; for the heavy taxation imposed on the Egyptians see Cic. Rab. Post. 31; D.R. Walker & C.E. King, *The Metrology of the Roman Silver Coinage*, 3 vols., Oxford 1976-1978, 1.150f; O. Mørkholm, "Ptolemaic Coins and Chronology: the Dated Silver Coinage of Alexandria", *American Numismatic Society Museum Notes* 20 (1975) 7.

suggests extreme methods and certainly raising such a huge amount can have been no easy task. Undoubtedly, Postumus' actions might be expected to alienate the Egyptians, and Cicero during his trial tells us that he was in fact thrown in jail for his pains. Cicero's plea is clearly intended to elicit the jurors' sympathy by presenting Postumus' treatment at the hands of the Egyptian king as being akin to martyrdom, and even if such a statement held any grain of truth, it would seem more probable that it was due to the extractive nature of his task rather than the king's whims that his life was placed in jeopardy.⁶⁴ It seems quite likely that his activities would have fermented popular discontent, because taxes were already high in Egypt, and a further tribute imposed by the Romans could be expected to be profoundly resented. In the face of this, the king may have been forced to restrain Postumus in some form—even if this was only a temporary prohibition on leaving his place of residence. Subsequently, according to Cicero, Postumus was forced to flee the country arriving back in Italy sometime in summer 54, having spent just over a year in Alexandria.⁶⁵ It seems likely that the king would have shed few tears at the departure of his leading creditor whose activities in Alexandria would not have contributed to the stability of his throne, and when Gabinius' money had been raised, the king, who presumably was closely tied to him for reasons of security (note the presence of the supportive Alexandrian witnesses at Gabinius' trial), would have been more reluctant to accept Postumus' presence in Alexandria.⁶⁶

Once Postumus was back in Rome, he soon found himself on trial charged with extortion under the clause of the Julian law ' *Quo ea pecunia pervenerit* ' as a consequence of his involvement in the Egyptian venture. In fact, his case formed an appendage to Gabinius' earlier trial for

⁶⁴ Cic. Rab. Post. 39, 40; E. Bloedow, Beiträge zur Geschichte des Ptolemaios XII, Diss. Würzburg 1963, 74-79; H. Heinen, Rom und Ägypten von 51 bis 47 v.Chr.: Untersuchungen zur Regierungszeit der 7. Kleopatra und des 13. Ptolemäers., Diss., Tübingen 1966, 39 n. 2.

⁶⁵ Cicero, Rab. Post. 40, states that the gossip about Postumus' supposedly richly laden ships berthed in Puteoli lasted only one summer, implying that he had arrived back from Egypt earlier in that season. Given the fact that the journey from Alexandria to Italy, which was often troublesome, could last at least sixty days, then Postumus' reportedly heavily loaded ships must have left Egypt in late spring, see Cic. Att. 5.12.1f; L. Casson, "Speed under Sail of Ancient Ships", TAPA 82 (1951) 139, 145 n. 38.

⁶⁶ Cic Rab. Post. 34-35

extortion in which he was found guilty and liable to pay 10,000 talents—a sum matching that allegedly promised by the king for his military services. However, as Gabinius sought the refuge of exile instead of paying this exorbitant fine, the political opponents of the triumvirs with M. Porcius Cato as their main advocate called Postumus to justice in the hope of making him responsible for Gabinius' unpaid fine, if it could be proved that he had received some of the money which had illegally passed to the absconder Gabinius from Ptolemy XII Auletes.⁶⁷ The main charges of the prosecution were: that Postumus' various financial dealings should be seen as a general incitement to corruption in public life, that Postumus had personally goaded Gabinius into restoring Ptolemy XII Auletes and, finally, that he had secured money for himself over and above the original loan.⁶⁸ Within his defence speech, *Pro Rabirio Postumo*, Cicero deliberately plays down Postumus' role in the events trying to distance his trial from that of Gabinius, and, instead, focuses his line of argument on a succession of legal technicalities before resting his peroration on a rather blatant invocation of his client's powerful connections and, particularly, his close relationship with Caesar.⁶⁹ Whether Cicero was successful in his defence is unknown, but, on balance, despite the earlier conviction of Gabinius it would seem most likely that Postumus was acquitted. Such was the difficulty of securing convictions for extortion at that time that Cicero himself exclaimed that nothing less than murder was punishable⁷⁰ and, as Postumus' was a subsidiary trial, it may be that, as was often the case, the jurors, although they were the same as had passed verdict on Gabinius, were more lax after having shown greater severity in the principal trial. However, the trump card in securing an acquittal must have been Cicero's

⁶⁷ Cic. Q.fr. 3.1.15, Att. 4.17.4, Rab. Post. 30-31.

⁶⁸ Cic. Rab. Post. 6, 19, 30-31.

⁶⁹ M.D. Siani, Commentary on Cicero's *Pro Rabirio Postumo*, Ph.D. Diss., London 1991, 7-9.

⁷⁰ For Cicero's statement see Cic. Att. 4.18.3; for the result see Dessau, "Gaius", 613, 617 (as in n. 4); E. Ciaceri, *Cicerone e i suoi tempi*, 2 vols., Milan 1926-1930, 2.134-37 who prefer acquittal, whereas Drumann & Groebe, *Geschichte Roms*, 6.70 (as in n. 37) and Gruen, *Last Generation*, 336 (as in n. 22) favour conviction; for a detailed account of the trials between 55 and 53 see Gruen, *Last Generation*, 312-37 (as in n. 22). The comparison in Suetonius (Suet. Claud. 16.2) between Postumus' case and another, which is sometimes held up as proof of conviction, would seem to be completely without foundation, as his trial has obviously been confused with that of Gabinius' *de maiestate*.

heavy and prolonged emphasis on his client's close links with Caesar.⁷¹ Finally, the subsequent career of Postumus, who not long after the trial seems to have been elevated to the senate, as outlined below, hardly matches that of a man who bore the stigma of conviction.

The financial consequences of the Egyptian escapade are also far from clear. Cicero is adamant in his defence speech that Postumus returned from the enterprise impoverished, although it is difficult to believe that so experienced a businessman supported by such powerful figures would lose heavily on this type of deal, and certainly rumours were sweeping Puteoli that Postumus enriched himself materially from the Egyptian venture.⁷² However, that not all the money was collected is also explicitly stated within the elaborate panegyric to Caesar at the end of *Pro Rabirio Postumo*, where there is a forceful suggestion as to the fate of any remaining debts owed to the circle of financiers surrounding Postumus. In the speech Cicero speaks of Caesar 'who shouldered the burdens of many of Postumus' friends', with the implication being that he underwrote all the pecuniary obligations that Postumus had to his fellow financiers, thereby effectively consolidating all the outstanding debts under his name, and, in the process, becoming Postumus' largest 'creditor', although it is unlikely that he ever forced repayment.⁷³

⁷¹ For the attitude of jurors in subsidiary trials see Cic. Clu. 116; for Caesar's involvement see Rab. Post. 44f; for the very survival of the speech as being a telling argument for acquittal see A.E. Douglas, "Review of J.W Crawford, 'The Lost and Unpublished Orations'", JRS 76 (1986) 334.

⁷² Regarding the losses sustained by those financiers who invested in the project after the *senatus consultum* of 57 on the expectation that Lentulus would restore the king and, who, obviously, were outside the bounds of the group of businessmen aligned with the *triumvirs*, see Cic. Fam. 7.17.1, 1.5a.3-4; Plut. Caes. 48.4. There are also indications that even Gabinius, the chief financial beneficiary, did not receive all that he was due, see Cic. Att. 4.18.3.

⁷³ Cic. Rab. Post. 41; when Caesar arrived in Alexandria in 48 in pursuit of Pompey he presented a claim for 17,500,000 *denarii* to the heirs of Ptolemy XII Auletes for a debt owed by their father—from which Caesar waived 7,500,000, but demanded the balance of 10,000,000—equivalent to 3,000 talents—for his military expenses, see Plut. Caes. 48. Since we have no evidence of any involvement by Caesar postdating Postumus' stay in Egypt, this amount could refer to a part of the loans raised by Postumus in Rome to finance the restoration of the king which remained unpaid—although the orthodoxy among scholars is to suppose that the debt to which Caesar was laying claim resulted from payments made in 59, see Gelzer, Caesar, 247 (as in n. 2); R.D. Sullivan, *Near Eastern Royalty and Rome, 100—30 BC*, Toronto 1990, 244.

The extent of Caesar's role in financing the operation is difficult to gauge, but it would seem likely that given the high risk of the project in order to raise the initial money Postumus would have had to make some assurances to his fellow investors. Guaranteeing such a large sum may well have been beyond his means and, anyhow, given the political sensibilities of the matter the presence of a strong backer from the beginning would seem to have been almost inevitable. Although, the indications here are that Caesar eventually fulfilled that role, it might be that he was merely exploiting a situation in which Pompey was unable or unwilling to meet his original commitments. If there is some truth in Cicero's lengthy assertions of Postumus' poverty it may be that, given the support that Caesar was evidently willing to provide him financially, C. Memmius, the prosecutor, by bringing Postumus to trial, hoped that Caesar might eventually foot the bill, if the defendant was found guilty and ordered to pay. If this was the case, Cicero in his stirring eulogy to Caesar at the end of *Pro Rabirio Postumo* would seem to be firing a warning shot across Memmius' bows as to the folly and danger of such a course of action.⁷⁴

That Caesar did give Postumus his backing at this time is borne out by the financier's subsequent career in which, with his fortune apparently still intact, he binds himself ever closer to his political patron. Cicero may have successfully defended Postumus at his trial in 54/53, but differing political allegiances were to place strains on their relationship, and by 49, when we hear of their paths crossing again, the orator expresses considerable irritation at the constant pestering of his friend, who had obviously been raised to the senate in the meantime. And, indeed, these were the times when the senate was composed of men of non-consular lineage, like Postumus, due to the disappearance of many noble lines because of war or proscription and the exclusion of others for favouring the losing side during the civil war. Following Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon in January 49, Cicero was particularly preoccupied as to whether he should join Pompey and wrestling with this dilemma in a series of almost daily letters during March, April and May 49 he turned to his dearest friend Atticus for advice and succour, especially since he was being constantly pestered by an unwanted visitor, none other than Postumus. The close sequence of these letters indicate that Cicero is referring to the same person throughout even though, in naming him, he freely interchanges the

⁷⁴ Cic. Rab. Post. 41-42.

appellations Curtius and Postumus and, at one point, calls his tiresome guest Curtius Postumus. Writing from his villa at Formiae Cicero in a letter dated 8th March 49 states that his old friend and former client (presumably an allusion to the trial of 54/53) has come to pay him a visit, but talked incessantly of nothing else but fleets and armies and Caesar's plans to pursue Pompey in Greece.⁷⁵ Perhaps Postumus, who by now was obviously a fervent Caesarian, had sought to sway Cicero's opinion in his patron's favour, but, instead, his constant visits only seem to have aroused his old friend's ire. On the next day Postumus is reported as calling for a second time with further news about Caesar's military progress and acquisition of ships, and on the 10 March 49 he was yet again in Cicero's house tiresomely boasting about Caesar.⁷⁶ By now, Cicero was extremely upset with himself for having received Postumus in the first place and obviously vexed by his constant pestering Cicero wonders how he is going to endure his attacks in the senate, if he is not able to deal with him in his own house.⁷⁷

Since 54 Postumus had, therefore, cemented his alliance with Caesar and, presumably, as some type of reward, been upgraded to the senate.⁷⁸ Once raised to this body he seems to have actively sought magisterial office, since on 3rd May 49 Cicero writes from his villa at Cumae to his friend Caelius Rufus about how his friend Postumus has been promised a high priestly office by Caesar.⁷⁹ In this letter Postumus is also for the first time mentioned alongside L. Oppius, an *eques*, who was a friend and financial agent of Caesar. Oppius is usually associated with Cornelius Balbus, another financier, close to Caesar and, it seems, that this was the circle in which Postumus now moved, because three years later in

⁷⁵ Cic. Att. 9.2a.3 (name given: Postumus Curtius).

⁷⁶ Cic. Att. 9.3.2 (name given: Postumus), and Att. 9.5.1 where Cicero freely interchanges the appellations Postumus and Curtius.

⁷⁷ Cic. Att. 9.6.2 (name given: Curtius); Att. 10.13.3 (name given: Curtius); Att. 9.5.1.

⁷⁸ The exact date and the circumstances of his promotion as a senator are unknown but by 10 March 49 Postumus seems to have been an active member of the senate, see Cic. Att. 9.5.1 and Dessau, "Gaius", 617 (as in n. 4).

⁷⁹ Cic. Fam. 2.16.7 (name given: Curtius); on the political value of the priesthoods see M. Beard "Priesthoods in the Roman Republic", in M. Beard & J. North (eds.), *Pagan Priests, Religion and Power in the Ancient World*, London 1990, 17-48.

September 46, he is still mentioned in conjunction with these men.⁸⁰ At that time Cicero writing to his Pompeian friend, Ampius Balbus, to reassure him that he has numerous friends close to Caesar who could grant him a passport and let him return to Italy, cites amongst his Caesarian acquaintances C. Vibius Pansa Caetronianus, A. Hirtius, L. Cornelius Balbus, C. Oppius, C. Matius and Postumus.⁸¹

Postumus was thus not only a successful financier with growing political influence but was also moving in the select circle of those who were closest to Caesar, and a further indication of these links may be discerned in the career of one of his many freedmen. An inscription from Rome, which was later transferred to Sicily, records that one of these, Gaius Curtius Helenus, served as a priest in the College of the *Luperci*.⁸² By the time of Cicero minor religious boards, such as that of *Luperci*, were in decline and considered somewhat *louche*, but in 46 Caesar made a concerted attempt to improve their status by allotting them extra funds and incorporating new members by placing his own freedmen in the College.⁸³ Caesar's efforts were apparently to be of no avail since the College remained the place for raffish aristocrats and freedmen but it seems quite possible that the elevation of one of Postumus' freedmen to the office of the *Lupercus* owes much to Caesar's attempts to upgrade the institution since he also encouraged his powerful friends to enroll their freedmen within the College at this time.

The only extant evidence suggesting that Postumus attained high political office during his life are two sources which attest that he served as a proconsul. The first of these is a bilingual inscription found in Delos on a

⁸⁰ Att. 15.2.3 (name given: Postumus), Fam. 6.12.2 (name given: Postumius) and Fam. 2.16.7 (name given: Curtius), because they also contain references to the other financiers close to Caesar, it has been commonly accepted that these letters all refer to Postumus; see Shackleton Bailey, *Epistulae ad Familiares*, 1.495, 2.392 (as in n. 16); *idem*, *Roman Nomenclature*, 82 (as in n. 13) and Dessau, "Gaius", 617 (as in n. 4); for the enrichment of all those who enlisted in Caesar's service such as Labienus, Balbus and Oppius, see Cic. Q.fr. 3.1.8, 10, 13, 18.

⁸¹ Cic. Fam. 6.12.2; for Pansa see MRR, 2.325, for Hirtius see MRR, 2.295, 309, for Balbus see MRR, 2.433 and Broughton, Supplement, 33, for Oppius see RE 18.1, cols 729-736, no 9 and for Matius see RE 14, cols 2206-2210, no 1.

⁸² CIL VI 32437 = ILS 4945 'C. Curtius / Post. l. Helenus / lupercus'.

⁸³ Treggiari, *Freedmen*, 195-96 (as in n. 61); for examples of the freedmen of Caesar and his friends enrolled in the College of the *Luperci* at this time see CIL XIV 2105 (C. Julius Caesaris l. Salvius) and CIL VI 1933 (Q. Considius Q. l. Eros).

square based grey-blue marble, situated in the North-West portico identified as that of Philippus V, near the western side of the road leading to the southern entrance of the Sanctuary of Apollo. The inscription on this marble attests that 'C. Rabirius the son of Gaius'—the formal version of Postumus' name being adopted for a public inscription—was a proconsul, but it does not state which was the province in question nor the time of his period of office.⁸⁴ It seems likely that this square base formed the pedestal of a statue of Postumus, but this has not so far been found or identified. Indeed, Delos seems to have positively bristled with such statues and close to the portico of Philippus V, in the Italian agora, a number of Roman and Italian dignitaries, such as another proconsul of Asia of uncertain date, C. Cluvius L. f., and powerful political figures of the stature of A. and P. Gabinius A. f., ancestors of Gabinius, Postumus' partner in the restoration of the Egyptian king, were honoured by having their effigies housed in private statue niches beneath the ground floor portico.⁸⁵ It was also customary for influential figures of the commercial and financial world of the time, including representatives of the powerful Delian business community, to be commemorated in a similar fashion, and so on account of both his political and commercial interests it would have been quite in keeping for a man such as Postumus to have had a statue erected in such a location.

This epigraphical source for Postumus' proconsulship is confirmed and expanded by literary evidence from Josephus who also provides enough clues to suggest that Postumus was a proconsul of Asia.⁸⁶ Josephus

⁸⁴ CIL I² 773 = CIL 7239 = ILLRP 399 = ID 1859 '[C. Rabirium C.f.]/ pro. cos/ Γάϊον 'Ραβήριον Γάϊου / υἱὸν ἀνθύπατον/ 'Ρωμαίων; see F. Durrbach, *Choix d' inscriptions de Délos avec traduction et commentaire*, Paris 1921, 167; P. Bruneau, *Recherches sur les cultes de Délos à l' époque hellénistique et à l' époque impériale*, Paris 1970, 553.

⁸⁵ For an extensive account of such luminaries see N.K. Rauh, *The Sacred Bonds of Commerce*, Amsterdam 1993, 9, 296, 298 n. 19 and 20; for promagisterial visits to Delos and their purpose see Athen. 5.212 a-b, 213 c-d; Appian *Mith.* 6.39; ILLRP 343; R. Étienne, *Ténos II. Ténos et les Cyclades du milieu du IV^e siècle av. J.-C. au milieu du III^e siècle ap. J.-C.*, Paris 1990, 127-34 and J.-L. Ferrary, "Délos vers 58 av. J.-C" in J.-C. Dumont, J.-L. Ferrary, P. Moreau, et al. (eds.), *Insula Sacra. La loi Gabinia Calpurnia de Délos (58 av. J.-C)*, Rome 1980, 35-61.

⁸⁶ Jos. A. J. 14.241 'Λαοδικαίων ἄρχοντες Γαίῳ Ραβηρίῳ Γαίῳ υἱῷ ἀνθυπάτῳ χαίρειν'. The MSS read 'ὑπάτῳ' which T. Homolle, "Le Proconsul Rabirius", *BCH* 6 (1882) 608-12 on the basis of the inscription found at Delos emended to 'ἀνθυπάτῳ' and 'Ραβελλίῳ' to 'Ραβηρίῳ'.

recorded that the magistrates of Laodicea, a town in that province, acknowledged receiving instructions from 'Gaius Rabirius, the son of Gaius, proconsul' concerning the status of the Jewish population of their town.⁸⁷ This letter largely reports on the substance of a correspondence between Postumus and Hyrcanus II, the high priest of the Jews.⁸⁸ It appears that instructions, apparently emanating from Rome, to grant free religious rights to the Jews had met with some local opposition, especially from the town of Tralles, also in Asia, and the magistrates of Laodicea were writing to Postumus to assure him that they will comply with his instructions and that the documents would be lodged in the public archive. The letter indicates that Postumus had himself received instructions to issue these decrees regarding the Jews and, although they may not have been directly the work of Caesar, they were perhaps issued at his suggestion, since they fall within his policy of meeting the demands of the provincials so as to consolidate the empire, and also reflect his general policy towards the Jewish communities which were not to be hindered in their religious practices.⁸⁹

The date of Postumus' proconsulship is a matter of some scholarly debate, but considering that he was still an *equus* at the time of his trial in 54/53 and that, whatever the result of the proceedings, it presumably took

⁸⁷ Between 62-56 the three districts of Cilicia, Laodicea, and Apamea with Synnada were joined to the province of Asia, see D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, 2 vols., Princeton 1950, 1.384, 402, 2.1245 n. 18, 1256 n. 77. In 56 they were detached from Asia and assigned back to Cilicia (Cic. Fam. 3.7.5, 1.3.2; Att. 5.21.8), but this arrangement did not last long for in 49 they were given back to Asia, as is indicated by the *cistophori* of C. Fannius, governor of Asia of that year, minted in Ephesus, Tralles, Laodicea and Apamea; see CIL I² 763, no. 376; R. Syme, "Observations on the Province of Cilicia", *Roman Papers*, 1 (1979) 1.141-44.

⁸⁸ E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 BC - AD 135)*, 2 vols., Edinburgh 1973-1987, 1.275 suggests that this Hyrcanus must be Hyrcanus II (63-40); see also, J. Juster, *Les Juifs dans l' Empire romain*, Paris 1914, 1.146 n. 7 who dates the document to 45. For an opposite point of view see T. Reinach, "Antiochus Cyzicène et les Juifs", *Revue des Etudes Juifs*, XX (1899) 161-71.

⁸⁹ This decree concerning the toleration of the Jews is one of four official documents which may constitute part of a single legislative act emanating from Rome, see Jos. A. J. 14.241-243, 244-246, 256-258, 259-261. Postumus' adoptive father, C. Rabirius, could be another possible candidate for this post, but he is ruled out not only because he is not recorded as ever having held such an office but, more tellingly, because the identity of the proconsuls of Asia is known for each of the years between the ascension of Hyrcanus II to his priesthood in 63 and the trial of Postumus in 54/53, in which it is revealed that C. Rabirius was dead, leaving no time for him to have held the proconsulship.

him some time to cross the threshold of the senate, let alone to achieve one of the major magistracies that would have ultimately paved the way to this more elevated post, then it can be safely suggested that he only ascended to the office sometime after 50. Since there is no evidence that Postumus ever achieved the office of consul, although he does, at one point, seem to have considered standing for the office, solely on the basis that Postumus rose to be a proconsul, Broughton suggested that he was a *praetor* in either 48 or 47.⁹⁰ However, since no evidence exists for him ever achieving this office or any of the minor qualifying magistracies, any dates ascribed to his period of office must remain purely speculative.⁹¹ The possible dates for Postumus' period of office as proconsul of Asia can be further narrowed down through reference to the other holders of the post at this time. Until summer 48, the cities of Asia had been loyal to Pompey, but the depredations of Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio Nasica, proconsul of Syria, Imperator and father-in-law of Pompey, who during 49-48 had bled the population white with his heavy taxation, caused them to switch their sympathies towards Caesar, who arrived in Asia in August 48, and it seems likely that this date can serve as a *terminus post quem* for Postumus' period of office.⁹² During his short visit —three to four weeks—on his journey to Egypt (where he stayed until June 47), Caesar assigned the general control of the Roman provinces of the Eastern Mediterranean to Cn. Domitius Calvinus. However, his exact status remains unclear, as according to the testimony of Suetonius he was one of Caesar's legates, and his sphere of operations seems to have been considerable, stretching well beyond Asia ('...Asiam finitimasque provincias administrandas tradiderat ... ') to include neighbouring provinces, most likely Bithynia-Pontus and

⁹⁰ For Postumus considering to become a consul see Cic. Att. 12.49.2, 13.9.1; for Broughton's dates see MRR, 2.273, but later Broughton, Supplement, 181 cautions that perhaps Postumus need not have been a *praetor* in 48 as Sumner, "Lex Annalis", 254 (as in n. 33) had suggested.

⁹¹ C. Rabirius Postumus should not be confused with a Postumus mentioned in Cic. Mur. 54, 56, 57, 69 who was a candidate for the praetorship in 63, since the senatorial career of C. Rabirius Postumus began later around 49 (Cic. Fam. 2.16.7).

⁹² Dio 42.2.1.

Cilicia but, perhaps even, Syria.⁹³ During his period in office Calvinus seems to have been constantly engaged in military endeavours even marching as far as Comana and Nicopolis on the Armenian border in an unsuccessful war against Pharnakes, the king of Pontus. The ambiguity of his status and his ceaseless warmaking combine to suggest that he may not have been formally enrolled as proconsul of any of the provinces and that, instead, he enjoyed some supra-governorial role with perhaps no promagistrates being appointed in the individual provinces—given the chaos prevailing in the Roman world during the civil war. On the other hand, it might also be that official promagistrates were appointed at this time, and it is just possible that Postumus' period of office could date from this period, although the balance of probability points to a date postdating Calvinus' period in office. The latter seems to have left Asia during the late summer of 47 as by September he was back in Rome ready to take part in Caesar's African campaign.⁹⁴

Appian's account of the civil war provides evidence that during 48 Postumus had played a key role in Caesar's campaign against Pompey in Greece. Although in the history his name is inaccurately recorded as 'Postumius', a number of reasons would justify an identification with Postumus—a view strongly supported by Shackleton Bailey who harbours no doubts about Postumus being the 'Caesarian Postumius'.⁹⁵ Firstly, it would not be surprising to find Postumus in Caesar's camp during the civil war given the latter's unstinted support when Postumus was on trial in Rome in 54/53 and the evidence from Cicero's correspondence of 49 which directly links Postumus with the logistics of this campaign.⁹⁶ Secondly, the environment Postumus is reported to be moving in is somewhat familiar, as he is mentioned in conjunction with Gabinius, his old partner from the 'Egyptian venture' undertaken to restore Ptolemy XII Auletes to his throne, and Mark Antony, who participated as a cavalry

⁹³ For the time Caesar spent in Asia see Magie, *Roman Rule*, 1.405f, 2.1258 n. 2-3 (as in n. 87). On his lenient taxation programme for Asia see *Caes. B. C.* 3.105; Appian *B. C.* 2.89, 5.4; Dio 42.6.3. On Calvinus' identity and career see Suet. *Jul.* 36; *Caes. B. Al.* 34; *Bell. Afr.* 86.

⁹⁴ *Caes. Bell. Afr.* 86, 93; *Cic. Deiot.* 25; Caesar in his *lex de provinciis* prescribed two years as the normal tenure for a governor of consular rank, see Dio 43.25.3.

⁹⁵ Appian *B. C.* 2.56-59; Shackleton Bailey, *Roman Nomenclature*, 38 (as in n. 13).

⁹⁶ See above p. 229.

officer in the same campaign.⁹⁷ Thirdly, Postumus, a man accustomed to dealing with exceptional tasks given his background as *dioecetes* in Egypt, appears now to be entrusted with an errand crucial for Caesar's success in his campaign against Pompey, as he is recorded sailing Caesar's ships under adverse winds across the Adriatic sea—a skill expected of an experienced and well-known merchant who in the past was said to have transported by ships quantities of merchandise from Alexandria to Puteoli—and swaying Caesar's uncooperative military forces stationed at Brundisium into action through his skills of persuasion and diplomacy.⁹⁸ In his campaign against Pompey Caesar had pitched his camp at Dyrrachium but much of his army was stuck in Brundisium across the Adriatic sea which was seething with Pompeian vessels. Having failed once personally and a second time with messengers to communicate his orders to this waiting army Caesar in desperation turned to Postumus, who seems to have been something of a right-hand man, for the accomplishment of this by all accounts seemingly impossible mission —although Appian puts it slightly different '...Καίσαρ ἐπεποίθει τη τύχη.' In effect, Postumus appears to have held *carte blanche* as to the organisation of the operation, since Caesar's letter, which was read to the army at Brundisium, clearly states that 'they should follow Postumius on shipboard and sail to any place the wind might carry them.' Gabinius failed to respond, leading instead his army to disaster in Illyria, but Antony complied with Caesar's instructions, successfully crossing the sea with his men to Nymphaeum, and presumably he was accompanied by Postumus.⁹⁹

Since the last act of the civil war was to be played in Egypt, where Pompey met his untimely death, and Caesar presented a bill for what it was earlier suggested were the outstanding debts from 55, it is tempting to think that the financier, Postumus, remained part of the Caesarian entourage throughout this period. Certainly, he is recorded as being part of his retinue not only before but also after the Alexandrian war with the sources relating that during the African war of 46 he was entrusted, once again, with ensuring the transport of reinforcements and supplies.¹⁰⁰ It would seem quite likely that Postumus' unique experience of Egyptian

⁹⁷ Plut. Ant. 3.2-4; Cic. Pis. 49.

⁹⁸ Cic. Rab. Post. 40.

⁹⁹ Appian B. C. 2.58-59.

¹⁰⁰ See below p. 238.

conditions prompted Caesar to consign to him similar duties during the Alexandrian campaign. Indeed, whilst in Egypt, the Romans engaged in tasks which would have been particularly suitable to the Roman financier's talents, because Dio states that Caesar delayed his return to Rome after the defeat of Pompey in order to levy money from the Egyptians. The money was collected with such vigour that they indignantly complained that not even their temples were left untouched.¹⁰¹

In July 47, Caesar was urgently recalled from Alexandria by Calvinus on account of the threat of an imminent invasion by Pharnakes. The treacherous king of Pontus was, subsequently, defeated by Caesar at Zela in August and his army completely destroyed by Calvinus at Sinope.¹⁰² On his march north to Pontus Caesar placed new governors in the various provinces he visited with Syria being assigned to Sex. Julius Caesar, Cilicia falling under the control of Q. Marcius Philippus and, after the battle at Zela, Bithynia being allocated to C. Vibius Pansa.¹⁰³ Although it is unrecorded in the sources, it would seem most likely that it was at this juncture that Asia was placed in the hands of Postumus as a reward for his services. Dio describing the euphoric atmosphere that prevailed in Rome with the return of Caesar, in autumn 47, states that the victorious general rewarded all those who had supported his cause during the civil war by freely bestowing offices that were to last either for the rest of the year or, in some cases, for the following year, and this would suggest that Postumus' proconsulship can most probably be dated from July/August 47 until the end of that year or possibly the beginning of 46.¹⁰⁴ The proconsulship of P. Servilius Isauricus, who served for two years in the province and ascended to office in the summer of 46, would seem to serve

¹⁰¹ Dio 42.34.1, 42. 49. 1-5.

¹⁰² For Calvinus' unsuccessful campaign against Pharnakes see *Caes. B. Al.* 34-40; for Pharnakes' defeat at Sinope see *Appian Mith.* 120; *Caes. B. Al.* 70-76; Dio 42.47.5; see also MRR, 2.289 who speculates that Calvinus' sphere of control might have been only Asia.

¹⁰³ For Sex. Julius Caesar see *Caes. B. Al.* 66; Dio 47.26.3; for Quintus Philippus, who married Caesar's niece, and C. Vibius Pansa see *Cic. Fam.* 13.73-74; Syme, "Province of Cilicia", 1.127-28 (as in n. 87); Magie, *Roman Rule*, 1.413 (as in n. 87) suggests that Pontus was entrusted to Calvinus after Zela, but given the fact that Calvinus was present in Rome by September 47, this seems highly unlikely, see *Caes. Bell. Afr.* 86, 93; *Cic. Deiot.* 25.

¹⁰⁴ Dio 42.51.3; R.P. Saller, "Promotion and Patronage in Equestrian Careers", *JRS* 70 (1980) 44-63.

as a likely *terminus ante quem* for Postumus' period of office, and, certainly, on the basis of the letter recorded by Josephus he cannot have held office after the death of Hyrcanus II in 40.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, by early 46 Postumus seems to have joined Caesar in Africa during his campaign against the last Pompeian remnants, since in the history of the war, the *Bellum Africum*, a formal source in which he appears under the official name of Rabirius Postumus, it is mentioned that he is despatched to Sicily with some of Caesar's warships to secure a second convoy of reinforcements and food-supplies—a particularly suitable mission for a trader of his stature.¹⁰⁶

Following the African war, it is to Cicero we once more turn for the last known details of Postumus' career. The picture that emerges from the letters is of a man with fervent Caesarian sympathies, who frequently causes Cicero exasperation, but still remains his friend and a regular visitor to his house. In a letter dated 19 May 45, in which writing from Tusculum he tells Atticus about his decision to defend Gaius Marius, a relative of Caesar, Cicero with dismay exclaims 'what times we live in if Postumus is thinking of standing for the consulship !'. From the context and the highly ironic tone of the letters it becomes apparent that Cicero is referring to his old 'annoying' friend,¹⁰⁷ and it seems quite plausible that Postumus may have tested his chances—and these were extremely high under the circumstances—of rising to the consulship during that year. However, he is never recorded as achieving the office, and, in the next year, 44, his political ambitions were dealt a crushing and apparently irrevocable blow with the death of Caesar.¹⁰⁸ Postumus seems to have remained faithful to his great patron until the end, for when Cicero writes to Atticus bewailing the unsettling political climate after Caesar's death, he remarks that the staunch Caesarians, such as Postumus, would rightly point to the dangers that the murder of their patron has unleashed and criticises

¹⁰⁵ For suggestions on the date of Postumus' proconsulship see Broughton, Supplement, 181; H.J. Masson, *Greek Terms from Roman Institutions: a Lexicon and Analysis*, Toronto 1974, 160-61; G.V. Sumner, "Cicero, Pompeius, and Rullus", *TAPA* 97 (1966) 254-55 and *ILLRP* 399.

¹⁰⁶ The first convoy had been led by Alienus, see *Caes. Bell. Afr.* 8, 26, 44; *Dio* 43.6.3; *MRR*, 2.273, 302.

¹⁰⁷ *Cic. Att.* 12.49.2, 13.9.1; *Fam.* 2.16.7 (name given Curtius), see also Dessau, "Gaius", 617f (as in n. 4) and Shackleton Bailey, *Letters to Atticus*, 5.362 (as in n. 11).

¹⁰⁸ P.A. Brunt, *The Fall of the Roman Republic and Related Essays*, Oxford 1988, 5.

the anti-Caesarians for retaining and fulfilling Caesar's *acta* after his death.¹⁰⁹ In the same month from Puteoli in another letter to Atticus, dated 19 April 44, Postumus is also placed in the company of other Caesarians such as Censorinus, Messalla and Plancus whom Cicero calls 'a gang of brigands' (*latrocinii auctores*) who 'if they had been bolder after Caesar's death could have prevailed'.¹¹⁰

Following the death of his great patron, Postumus along with the other band of financiers who had supported Caesar, the inseparable Oppius, Balbus and Matius, seems to have readily transferred his allegiance to Caesar's adoptive son, Octavian. This relationship was probably fully reciprocated by the young Octavian, who upon his arrival in Rome might be expected to have contacted the friends and financiers of his adoptive father, especially after his fruitless efforts to convince Antony to release Caesar's money. It was Octavian who had to pay the unpaid legacies of Caesar to the plebs, and he could not have done this unless he sold his own property and resorted to the aid of the closest Caesarian financiers. That Postumus had entered the Octavian camp is shown by a letter of May/June 44 in which Cicero, writing to Atticus about his impressions of Octavian's speech, notes that he has been assisted in his preparations for the games (*ludi Victoriae*), commemorating Caesar's victory at Pharsalus, through the resources offered by Caesar's old friends—and now Octavian's financial agents—Matius—referred to before—and Postumus.¹¹¹ With the death of his friend, Cicero, in 43 Postumus fades from history. He is mentioned in no further sources, but it may be presumed that Octavian would have wished to continue to show favour to such an important financier. We do not know when Postumus died, but he would only have been around 40 to 45 years old at the death of Cicero, and it may be

¹⁰⁹ Cic. Att. 14.9.2 (name given Curtius), see also Shackleton Bailey, *Roman Nomenclature*, 21 (as in n. 13).

¹¹⁰ Cic. Att. 14.10.2 (name employed Postumus). The supposition that this is Postumus is further substantiated by the reference in the same letter to his fellow financier and staunch Caesarian, Balbus, who received Octavian in his house in Naples.

¹¹¹ Cic. Att. 15.2.3 (name given Postumus); for Matius see Att. 14.1.1 and Fam. 11.28.6-8; Suet. Aug. 10.1; Obsequens 128; Plin. Nat. 11.93; Dio 45.6.4; A. Alföldi, *Octavians Aufstieg zur Macht*, Bonn 1976, 31.

presumed that he lived for some time longer.¹¹²

The biography presented here is in many ways no more than a sketch of what was an active and busy life. But although many questions remain to be answered, this brief outline is a start, and it is to be hoped new material may yet shed further light on the career of a man who, as one of Caesar's most trusted confidants, was present at the heart of Roman politics during the last years of the Republic.

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¹¹² Some members of the group met untimely deaths, Hirtius at the hands of his own soldiers, who were acting at Octavian's instigation, and Pansa of poison sprinkled on his wounds, see Tac. Ann. 1.10; Suet. Aug. 11.1.