



CABARET

See *Variety, Revue, and Cabaret Entertainment*.

CAESAR, [GAIUS] JULIUS (100–44 B.C.)

Roman politician, general, and author. Although of distinguished patrician lineage, Caesar was connected by marriage with the popular party. Accordingly, he found that his political career was hindered by the success of Sulla, who had triumphed over Marius, the leader of the popular forces. Refusing to divorce his wife Cornelia as Sulla had commanded, he found it prudent to join the military campaign in Asia Minor (81 B.C.). Exploiting his youthful good looks, together with the boundless charm for which he continued to be noted, he threw himself with relish into a scandalous liaison with king Nicomedes IV of Bithynia.

Returning to Rome, he maneuvered successfully in the treacherous Senatorial politics of the day, forming an alliance (triumvirate) with Pompey and Crassus. Beginning in 58 B.C. he undertook the nine-year conquest of Gaul, an achievement he commemorated in the *Gallic Wars*, a masterpiece of trenchant Latin prose. Eventually, unfavorable events in Rome forced him to return and, crossing the River Rubicon, he undertook the conquest of Italy itself. Becoming dictator, he initiated a vigorous program of legislation that foreshadowed the empire founded by his great-nephew Octavius, subsequently known as Augustus. On the Ides of March 44 Caesar was killed by a conspiracy headed by his associates Brutus and Crassus.

In addition to his three wives and several mistresses, Julius Caesar had a

number of homosexual affairs. After serving as the catamite of Nicomedes, as mentioned, Caesar was (according to Catullus) the *cinaedus* or hustler to one Mamurra. Ceaseless in sexual as in every other activity, he earned the sobriquet of "Husband to every woman and wife to every man." Sex and money were essential barter for rising in the troubled period of Rome's Civil Wars. And in fact Octavius in turn was rumored to have ingratiated himself with his great-uncle through sexual availability.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. Arthur D. Kahn, *The Education of Julius Caesar: A Biography, a Reconstruction*, New York: Schocken, 1986.

Warren Johansson

CALAMUS

This word derives from the Greek *kalamos*, a reed, and by extension a flute, fishing rod, and a reed pen. From the latter usage stems the Latin *lapsus calami*, a slip of the pen. Walt Whitman entitled the most overtly homoerotic and self-revealing section of *Leaves of Grass*, "Calamus." He was thinking of one particular variety of plant, the sweet flag (*Acorus calamus*), as a symbol of male-male affection. It must have appealed to him also because of the traditional association of the calamus (= reed pen) with the writer's profession. Yet, from Greek mythology he may have known the story of Calamus, the son of a river god, who was united in tender love with another youth, Carpus. When Carpus was accidentally drowned, the grief-stricken Calamus was changed into a reed.