

THE WATERS OF THE SATRACHUS (CATULLUS 95.5)

In lines 5–8 of his 95th poem Catullus contrasts the everlasting world-wide fame which P. Helvius Cinna's *Smyrna*¹ will enjoy with the quick death which Volusius' *Annales* will suffer before they get beyond the Po:

Smyrna mei Cinnae nonam post denique messem
 quam coepta est nonamque edita post hiemem,
 milia cum interea quingenta Hatriensis in uno
 <uersiculorum anno putidus euomuit,>
 Smyrna †canas† Satrachi penitus mittetur ad undas, 5
 Smyrnam cana diu saecula peruoluent.
 at Volusi Annales Paduam morientur ad ipsam
 et laxas scombris saepe dabunt tunicas.
 parua mei mihi sint cordi monumenta <Philetiae>,
 at populus tumido gaudet in Antimacho. 10

3 Hatriensis in *Housman* (Hatrianus in *iam Munro*), Hortensius V 4 suppl. e.g. *Munro*
 5 canas V, cauas *Itali* 9 Philetiae suppl. *Bergk*

Since the Renaissance, editors of Catullus have accepted the 'palaeographical' correction of the unmetrical 'canas' to 'cauas'. However, in 1978 Professor Nisbet² observed that in this context '*cauas* Satrachi... undas' is not really appropriate, and that since the transmitted 'canas' apparently is merely an error of anticipation arising from 'cana' directly underneath, what Catullus actually wrote need not have had much resemblance to 'canas'. Thus far I am in agreement with Nisbet. However, I am not altogether happy with his proposal 'suas', which he suggested would convey the point that Cinna's 'poem will be sent even to the exotic places from which Zmyrna herself came'. This involves an identification of Smyrna the subject of Cinna's poem with Smyrna the poem itself, which is not entirely apt since the subject of 'mittetur' must certainly be the poem itself. Catullus' point must be that the *Smyrna*, which Cinna wrote in Italy, will travel far and wide, in contrast to the 'Volusi Annales', and so the emphasis ought to be on the Italian origin of Smyrna the poem rather than the Cypriot origin of Smyrna the girl. Moreover, I think the possessive adjective 'suas' does not abide well with the genitive of possession 'Satrachi'.³

Another possibility is suggested by another passage in which we find Smyrna/Myrrrha and the Satrachus mentioned together, Nonnus, *Dionys*. 13.456–60:

καὶ Πάφον, ἀβροκόμων στεφανηφόρον ὄρμον Ἑρώτων,
 ἐξ ὑδάτων ἐπιβαθρον ἀνερχομένης Ἀφροδίτης,
 ἥχι θαλασσογόνου Παφίης νυμφίῳ ὕδωρ,
 Σέτραχος ἡμερόεις, ὅθι πολλάκις εἶμα λαβοῦσα
 Κύπρις ἀνεχλαίνωσε λελουμένον νύεα Μύρρης.

As the example of Callimachus has shown repeatedly, Nonnus is a treasure-trove of

¹ With G. P. Goold (ed.), *Catullus* (London, 1983), pp. 261–2, I follow Priscian's authority (*GL* 2.23 and 2.41–2) in spelling the name with an *S* even though the MSS spell it, as it was pronounced, with a *Z*.

² R. G. M. Nisbet, *PCPhS* 204 (1978), 110–11.

³ As noted by J. B. Solodow, *CPh* 84 (1989), 317 n. 15. However, I do not share Solodow's acceptance of W. V. Clausen's explanation (*GRBS* 5 [1964], 189) of '*cauas* Satrachi... undas'. As Nisbet observed, at Lucan 2.41–2 'dexteriora petens montis declivia Thybrim | unda facit Rutubamque cauum' 'the adjective [*cauum*] suggests the channel of a mountain torrent'; i.e., the gorge cut by the *unda* is deep, but the *unda* itself is not deep. One could, I suppose, posit a transferred epithet, but I see no compelling reason to do so when the transmitted 'canas' almost surely arose from the next verse and what Catullus actually wrote could well have had little resemblance to it.

information and turns of phrase which he found in Hellenistic poets whose works were subsequently lost. In this case, we learn that the Satrachus (also spelled Setrachus)⁴ was the 'bridebath' of Aphrodite, and that the son of Myrrha, Adonis, often bathed in it. Baths in general, and especially those in which divinities bathed, were considered sacred: cf. Nicaenetus (apud Parthenius 11.2) 7 *Κάρια ἱρὰ λοετρά*, and *Suppl. Hell.* 961.18 *φίλης ἀγνὰ λοετρά κόρης*. So were, of course, the waters of the baths: cf. [Lygdamus] 5.3 'sacris Baiarum...lymphis'. And there is no shortage of Greek references to the 'sacred water' of a stream or the like; e.g. Theocritus *Id.* 1.69 *Ἀκιδος ἱερὸν ὕδωρ* and the Orphic Hymn 69.4 *Στυγὸς ἱερὸν ὕδωρ*. Also note *ἱερὰ κύματα* at Euripides, *Cyclops* 265 and *ᾠκεανοῦ τε βαθυρόου ἱερὸν οἶδμα* at Quintus Smyrnaeus 2.117, as well as Germanicus, *Aratea* 525 and Accius, *Epinausimache* fr. 313–14 (Warmington), where Achilles says

...*Scamandriam undam salso sanctam* obtexi sanguine,
atque acruos alta in amni corpore expleui hostico.

I think I have now said enough to indicate what Catullus might well have written:

Smyrna sacras Satrachi penitus mittetur ad undas,
Smyrnam cana diu saecula peruolunt.

Catullus' contraposition of the 'sacrae undae' of the little Satrachus, which Cinna's *Smyrna* will reach, against the large Po, with its alluvial delta in the vicinity of Hatria,⁵ where Volusius' *Annales* will die, of course evokes Callimachus' famous contrasting (*Hymn. Apoll.* 108ff.) of the *Ἀσσυρίου ποταμοῖο μέγας ῥόος* with the *πῖδακος ἐξ ἱερῆς ὀλίγη λιβάς*. Thus the supplement 'sacras Satrachi...ad undas' reinforces the Callimachean aesthetics which play such a central role in poem 95.⁶ And lest anyone take exception to 'Smyrna sacras Satrachi', I should remark that this sort of alliteration is a favourite device of Catullus, as noted by Schuster in his Teubner edition with citations of, e.g., 64.159 'prisci praecepta parentis' and 320 'uellentes uellera uoces'. On my own initiative I can add 11.6 'seu Sacas sagittiferosue Parthos'.⁷

I should now add that when in August 1990 I sent an earlier draft of this note to Professor G. P. Goold, he informed me that Dr Stephen Heyworth had already suggested *sacras* to him that April (with other conjectures in Catullus) though without any explanations. Since Heyworth arrived at this conjecture independently of and indeed earlier than me, I desire that he be given at least equal credit for it.⁸

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⁴ *Τινὲς δὲ διὰ τοῦ ἔγράφουσι Σέτραχον*, as noted in the scholion to Lycophron, *Alexandra* 448 (E. Scheer [ed.], *Lycophronis Alexandra*, ii (Berlin, 1908), ad loc.).

⁵ See H. A. J. Munro, *Criticisms and Elucidations of Catullus* (Cambridge, 1877), pp. 211–12, and J. B. Solodow, *CPh* 82 (1987), 143–4, especially n. 10: 'Although we have no proof that [Volusius] hailed from Hatria, line 7 (*ipsam* in particular) makes sense only if the Paduan mouth of the Po is close to his home: Hatria, now inland Adria, lay on the coast in Roman times and looks to have been no more than three kilometers distant from its mouth'.

⁶ See Solodow, *CPh* 82 (1987), 144–5, especially n. 15.

⁷ Another possibility which had occurred to me is 'meras', but this would mean 'pure' in the sense 'unmixed' rather than 'undefiled', which a Roman would have rendered with 'puras'.

⁸ I would like to thank George Goold, Stephen Heyworth, Ian Rutherford, and Richard Thomas for their reactions to this note.