

*SPLENDIDIOR VITRO*: HORACE AND CALLIMACHUS

O fons Bandusiae, splendidior vitro.  
(Horace *Odes* 3.13.1)

In describing the waters of the *fons Bandusiae*, Horace employs an intriguing comparison: *splendidior vitro* (“more glimmering than glass”).<sup>1</sup> The comparison alludes to a phrase from the lost *Hecale* of Callimachus: ὑάλιο φαάντερος (frag. 18.2).<sup>2</sup> The

1. Or, less likely, “clearer than glass.” Transparency is the issue in *Carm.* 1.18.16, on which see n. 12, below.  
2. All citations from the *Hecale* are from Hollis 1990.

allusion has been noted in the scholarship, but its implications—both for Bandusia and *Ode* 3.13 in general—remain underappreciated.<sup>3</sup>

The *fons Bandusiae* is widely read as a Callimachean body of water. The source of this reading is, of course, Callimachus *Hymn to Apollo* 106–12, a programmatic passage wherein the cluttered and turgid Euphrates is rejected in favor of the *ὀλίγη λιβάς* (112), the small, clear stream.<sup>4</sup> Critics have demonstrated the relevance of this passage to Horace's spring.<sup>5</sup> Also relevant, especially to the *Hecale*, is the prologue to the second edition of the *Aetia*, Callimachus' manifesto on poetic "downsizing." In a famous *recusatio* the poet disdains the ideal of one continuous poem in many thousands of lines (*ἐν ἄεισμα διηνεκές . . . ἐν πολλαῖς . . . χιλιάσιν*, frag. 1.3–4 Pf.) and favors a slender muse (*Μοῦσαν . . . λεπταλέην*, frag. 1.24).<sup>6</sup> There is obviously more to say about both passages; I recall them here in order to introduce what is perhaps the essential Callimachean aspect of Horatian lyric, namely quality over quantity.<sup>7</sup>

As an indicator of Bandusia's crystalline clarity, *splendidior vitro* is already reminiscent of Callimachus.<sup>8</sup> When recognized as an imitation of *ὕαλοιο φαάντερος*, it seems like the ultimate validation of a Callimachean *fons*. Context, however, has the potential to muddy the waters (Callim. *Hecale* frag. 18.1–4):

ὄφρα μὲν οὖν ἔνδιος ἔην ἔτι, θέρμετο δὲ χθών,  
τόφρα δ' ἔην ὕαλοιο φαάντερος οὐρανὸς ἦνοψ  
οὐδὲ ποθὶ κνηκίς ὑπεφαίνετο, πέπτατο δ' αἰθήρ  
ἀννέφελος·

While it was still the middle of the day, and the earth was warm, then the gleaming sky was *brighter than glass*, nor did mist appear anywhere, and the heavens were spread wide, cloudless.

Callimachus' *ὕαλοιο φαάντερος* appears in circumstances rather different from its Latin version. For example, the sky (*οὐρανός*, 18.2), not water, is compared to glass. Furthermore, the shining heavens are one detail in a sequence that includes the earth (*χθών*, 18.1) and mist (*κνηκίς*, 18.3); Bandusia, in contrast, is the focal point of the Sabine landscape. Even the genres are different: epic narrative versus lyric invocation. These differences generate a certain amount of "noise,"<sup>9</sup> above which it might be difficult to hear a Callimachean echo in *splendidior vitro*. If nothing else, Horace's allusion may seem abstruse or even random.<sup>10</sup>

Yet context also affords the allusion greater significance. A. S. Hollis has demonstrated the self-consciously Homeric character of the above passage, from which

3. Both G. Williams 1969 and Hollis 1990 simply note the allusion without further consideration.

4. See F. Williams 1978 for the standard interpretation: "The fine spray from the pure spring stands for Callimachus' own poetry: on a small scale, but highly refined, written for the few who are able to appreciate the poet's learning and subtlety."

5. On the "limpid water" of the *fons* see Commager 1962, 322–24, whose interpretation presages the explicitly Callimachean readings of Hexter 1988, Coffta 1998, and Mader 2002.

6. On the *Aetia* prologue see Cameron 1995, especially 263–67, 338–59.

7. I intend "quality" versus "quantity" as a thematic rather than a physical distinction. The *Hecale*, for instance, was quite long (perhaps over 1,000 verses, according to Hollis), yet its subject matter and scope were suited to a "slender Muse"; see further Cameron 1995, 52, on the *μέγα βιβλίον* of Callim. frag. 465.

8. Mader (2002), whose excellent discussion of the Bandusia ode overlooks *ὕαλοιο φαάντερος*, nevertheless regards *splendidior vitro* as a nod to Callimachus' program: "[W]hether we interpret [the comparison] as referring to translucence or reflectiveness, an allusion to the Callimachean ideal of stylistic purity seems inescapable" (p. 54).

9. For "noise" as a factor that complicates the interpretability of allusions see Hinds 1998, 30–34.

10. In which case the allusion is "Callimachean" as a display of pure erudition, much like the Alexandrian poet's own references. This use of the term warrants care: see Thomas 1993, 198–99.

ύάλιο φαάντερος emerges as a novel formulation.<sup>11</sup> The irony is that the phrase, because of its novelty, may have taken on a life of its own outside of the *Hecale*.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, in a Homeric context the comparison squares with the *Hymn to Apollo* and the *Aetia*—a small but significant renovation of the literary tradition. Given that Callimachus figures prominently in Horace's reinvention of lyric, *splendidior vitro* recalls ύάλιο φαάντερος not only as the Greek poet's words, but also as a realization of his program.

There is more, for which it is necessary to consider fragment 18 and *Ode* 3.13 within their respective works. Verses 1–4 of the fragment describe the calm before a storm, which erupts in verses 8–15. The storm drives Theseus to the cottage (έλαχύν δόμον, frag. 26) of Hecale, who entertains the young hero with her meager resources (frag. 27–39). Here Callimachus offers an impoverished take on the lavish guest-friendship sequences in the *Odyssey*.<sup>13</sup> For instance, the ash bread served to Theseus (οίους βωνίτησιν ένικρύπτουσι γυναικες, frag. 35.2) is a deliberate contrast to the kingly loaves of Nestor (οἶα έδουσι διοτρεφέες βασιλῆες, *Od.* 3.480). Hecale also serves such simple delights as olives (frag. 36), samphire (frag. 38), and thistles (frag. 39). The scene expands on the premise of ύάλιο φαάντερος, simultaneously revering and downsizing Homer.<sup>14</sup>

As for Horace, *Ode* 3.13 correlates with others about the poet's estate, which is both hospitable and unassuming—characteristics that evoke the themes of the *Hecale*. The Sabine villa is a haven for guests: Tyndaris, for example, is personally invited to a symposium in *Ode* 1.17. Furthermore, Horace often depicts himself dwelling in rural simplicity, as in *Ode* 3.23, which vows the annual sacrifice of a young boar to Diana. *Ode* 1.31, in turn, contrasts the global interests of the burgeoning Empire with the rustic pleasures of the poet: *me pascunt olivae, me cichorea levesque malvae* (“olives nourish me, the chicory and tender mallow, too,” 15–16). The estate is a construct, as is Horace's claim to rusticity; but both are essential to his Callimachean outlook.<sup>15</sup>

Thus ύάλιο φαάντερος and *splendidior vitro* find a connection within these broader contexts. The cottage of Hecale and the Sabine villa both privilege the modest, the delicate, and the private over the grandiose, the grave, and the public. Horace

11. Hollis 1990: “Amid so much Homeric colour, this striking comparison is new.” Hollis adduces many parallels from Homer, among them θερμετο δ' ύδωρ (*Il.* 19.348; cf. θερμετο δε χθών, frag. 18.1); αλλά μάλ' αίθηρ πέπταται άνεφέλος (*Od.* 6.44–45; cf. πέπτατο δ' αίθηρ άνεφέλος, frag. 18.3–4); the correlative structure όρα . . . τόφρα (frag. 18.1–2). In these circumstances the coinage φαάντερος, coupled with the un-Homeric ύαλος, cannot fail to catch the reader's eye.

12. Hollis (1990) implies that ύάλιο φαάντερος became something of a catchphrase: “[The comparison] had great success with the Roman poets.” In addition to the Bandusia ode, Hollis cites *Carm.* 1.18.16 (*perucidior vitro*) as well as *Ov. Met.* 13.791 (*splendidior vitro* again). The other Horatian usage deserves a brief comment. *Carm.* 1.18 surveys the uses and abuses of wine; *perucidior vitro* is applied to *Fides*, which under the influence of wine becomes unable to keep its secrets (*arcani* . . . *prodiga*, 16), hence transparent. The poem remains puzzling to scholars, but the appearance of Callimachus' phrase is apt. Porter 1987, 78, notes that *Carm.* 1.18 is part of a sequence (1.13–19) “in which [Horace] . . . shies away from larger themes.” To put it another way, the sequence finds Horace operating in a typically introspective—Callimachean—mode. Moreover, the poet's introspection is sometimes triggered by, or associated with, wine: in the previous ode, 1.17 (which I discuss below), the private symposium serves as an escape from public strife.

13. Although *Od.* 14, in which the swineherd Eumaeus receives Odysseus, is also important.

14. The entertainment scene was admired and imitated in antiquity for its fresh approach to Homeric hospitality; Ovid's Baucis and Philemon narrative (*Met.* 8) is the best-known homage. Hollis (1990) treats the theme of guest-friendship at length.

15. Henderson (1999) reveals the complex of social, religious, and political concerns in the boar sacrifice of 3.22; Leach (1993) does the same for the Sabine villa itself. Outside of the *Odes*, *Sat.* 2.6 is regarded as Horace's treatise on the rustic life.

praises the *fons Bandusiae*, the very heart of his estate, with words that preface Callimachus' celebrated entertainment scene, the centerpiece of his poem. As noted earlier, it is possible to read Horace's comparison as Callimachean without the *Hecale*; consideration of the epic, even in its fragmentary state, sheds new light on *splendidior vitro*.

Landscapes change, as do programs. Elsewhere in Book 3 Horace addresses public concerns in the so-called Roman Odes, wherein he expands his lyric horizon. In fact, *Ode* 3.13 itself diverges from the Callimachean aesthetic: the imminent blood sacrifice will make Bandusia more than a mere *fons* or λιβάς.<sup>16</sup> The ode is something of a farewell to the *locus amoenus* of Book 1, in which the poet took comfort from the things at hand: olives, chicory, and mallow. Whether this rustic fare intentionally recalls what Hecale served to Theseus is food for thought.<sup>17</sup>

DAN CURLEY  
*Skidmore College*

16. A scholarly commonplace; compare Mader 2002, who finds the motif of blood in water suggestive of epic and panegyric, hence an "upsizing" (my term) of Horace's program. In a forthcoming article (see Literature Cited) I demonstrate that the *haedus* represents the poetics of Alcaeus, whose sacrifice transforms the Callimachean *fons* into something grander and more apt for the Augustan age.

17. I thank the editors and the anonymous referee. Any errors or omissions are of course my responsibility.

#### LITERATURE CITED

- Cameron, A. 1995. *Callimachus and His Critics*. Princeton.
- Coffta, D. J. 1998. Programmatic Synthesis in Horace, *Odes* III, 13. In *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History*, vol. 9, ed. C. Deroux, 268–81. Brussels.
- Commager, S. 1962. *The Odes of Horace*. New Haven, Conn.
- Curley, D. Forthcoming. The Alcaic Kid (Horace, *Odes* 3.13). *CW*.
- Henderson, J. 1999. *Writing down Rome: Satire, Comedy, and Other Offences in Latin Poetry*. Oxford.
- Hexter, R. 1988. *O Fons Bandusiae: Blood and Water in Horace, Odes* 3.13. In *Homo Viator: Classical Essays for John Bramble*, ed. M. Whitby, P. Hardie, and M. Whitby, 131–39. Bristol.
- Hinds, S. 1998. *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Latin Poetry*. Cambridge.
- Hollis, A. S., ed. 1990. *Callimachus Hecale*. Oxford.
- Leach, E. W. 1993. Horace's Sabine Topography in Lyric and Hexameter Verse. *AJP* 114:271–302.
- Mader, G. 2002. That St(r)ain Again: Blood, Water, and Generic Allusion in Horace's Bandusia Ode. *AJP* 123:51–59.
- Porter, D. 1987. *Horace's Poetic Journey: A Reading of Odes 1–3*. Princeton.
- Thomas, R. F. 1993. Callimachus Back in Rome. In *Callimachus*, ed. M. A. Harder, R. F. Regtuit, and G. C. Wakker, 197–215. Groningen.
- Williams, F., ed. 1978. *Callimachus Hymn to Apollo: A Commentary*. Oxford.
- Williams, G., ed. 1969. *The Third Book of Horace's Odes*. Oxford.