
8 For support from another perspective for the view that hymns constitute a genre different in both form and content from heroic narratives, see J.S. Clay, *The Politics of Olympus* (Princeton 1989), 1-8, 268-70.


10 *Greek Mythology and Poetics* (Ithaca 1990), 47.


12 *The Best of the Achaenians* (Baltimore 1979), 297-300.

13 Contrast e.g. G. Nagy, *op. cit.* (n. 10), 3 n. 7, who rightly refers to Hom. *Od.* xvii 381-5 as well as to Hes. *Erga* 24 ff.

*Aurelio Peretti, Dall’Eridano di Esiodo al Retrone Vincen

This book offers a lively picture of the roamings of the ancient hydronym Ἡριδάνως and of the roles played by the rivers so named, both in Greek mythology and economical history, especially in connection with the trade of amber. To be true, the only ‘river’ known that actually always went by this name, never played any part in either, but was an insignificant rivulet in Attica which emptied itself in the Kephis(s)os. First mentioned by Plato *Critias* 112a, its un-Greek name, as so often in Greece, had once been taken over by the invaders from the pre-Hellenic population, and has no convincing Indo-European etymology. In this respect it has its parallels in several other ancient water-names ending in -δάνως, the most telling instance being the triply occurring Ἴαρδάνως, one in Western Crete, one in the Peloponnesus, and one in Lydia. Much earlier, however, another, more formidable Eridanos had been mentioned in a mythological context, by Hesiod, as the off-spring of Okeanos and Tethys, together with such streams as the Nile and the Ister (*Theog.* 337-345). He describes it there as ‘deep-eddying’ (338), and also as ‘deep-flowing’ and ‘falling sheer down’
in the *Catalogue of Women* (frg. 150 MW), if it is really his. In this latter passage, a rather lacunary fragment of the story of Phineus and the Harpies, the river, of which precisely the name [Ἡρ̄δαιο] fits the metre but has been entirely supplied, seems to have some connection with amber and to be located in the neighbourhood of the somewhat hazy Hyperborceans.

No wonder therefore that in the 5th century Herodotus doubted its very existence, though he does at least not suppress that according to some it emptied itself into the ‘Northern Sea’ and provided amber (3,115). His contemporary Pherekydes located it in his Heracles-story in the far West, in the garden of the Hesperides (FGH 3, F16). According to Pliny Aeschylus identified the Eridanus in his version of the tale of Phaethon with the river Rhône in ‘Hibernia’, probably because the population of that part of Southern France was akin to the Spanish Iberians. On its banks Phaethon’s mourning sisters, the Heliaeides, had been changed by Zeus into poplars and were henceforth shedding tears of amber. In one of the actual fragments of this play Aeschylus speaks, however, of Ἀδριαναί γυναικεῖς, but P. explains this as meaning ‘western, exotic’. For Euripides, finally, the Eridanus was identical with the Po, of which he considered the Rhône to be the affluent (Pliny 37,31-32; Aesch. *Heliades* frg. 71 Ra; Eur. *Hipp.* 735-741). This latter identification became general in the Hellenistic period, with the exception of the professional Strabo, who, more cautiously, expressed as his personal opinion that “it is to be found nowhere on earth though said to be close to the Po” (5,1,9). This is an important remark, because unlike the Rhône/Rhodanus, the Po never had a name that even remotely resembled Eridanos, but was originally called Bodincus, probably the Ligurian name (Pliny 3,122), and later generally Padus. It is interesting, therefore, that as late as the 3rd cent. Aelian mentions a river Ἡρέτηνος in the neighbourhood of Vicenza, north of the Po and the Adige. AD 570 this river was called Reteno (gen. -nomis) by Venantius Fortunatus (Vita S. Martini 673-675), it appeared in the work of the 7/8th cent. Geographer of Ravenna as “Retron formerly Redenovo” (Cosm. 4,36), and in the medieval archives of Vicenza and Padua respectively as Retrone/Redrone/Rotrone/Rodrone and still other forms, the surviving modern variant Retrone being nowadays restricted to the upper-course of the Bacchiglione.

According to P. these varying identifications of the Eridanos reflect the course of the history of the amber-trade. His argument,