



# Bryn Mawr Classical Review

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**C. Austin, G. Bastianini, *Posidippi Pellaei quae supersunt omnia*. Milan: LED (Edizioni Universitarie di Lettere Economia Diritto), 2002. Pp. 234. ISBN 88-7916-193-8. EUR 18.00 (pb).**

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**Reviewed by Susan Stephens, Stanford University (susan.stephens@stanford.edu)**

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This editio minor produced by Colin Austin and Guido Bastianini (hereafter, A-B) is a welcome complement to the editio princeps of the newly discovered Milan papyrus roll of epigrams published in 2001.<sup>1</sup> Before this new papyrus find the third-century BCE epigrammatist, Posidippus of Pella, was known only from a handful of epigrams included in anthologies or cited in ancient sources and a few others preserved on papyrus and wax tablet. The original length of the new roll is unknown, but 112 epigrams (in 612 lines of text) survive before it breaks off. Most of the epigrams are of 4 or 6 lines, though a few are as long as 10 or even 14 lines. The editors of the editio princeps, Guido Bastianini and Claudio Gallazzi, identified the new roll as by Posidippus (and single authored) on the basis of coincidence of two epigrams attributed to Posidippus found elsewhere -- one in Tzetzes, *Chiliades* 653-661 (no. 15 in this collection) the other in the Planudean Anthology, 119 (here no. 65) -- as well as the complete absence of poems by any other known epigrammatist. Since Posidippus seems to have produced at least three or four epigram collections, the attribution is not prima facie unlikely, though it has not been without controversy. The two poems on which the identification depends are late and the accuracy of the attributions had been questioned even before the discovery of the new poems. Nor do all of the new poems appear to be of the same quality as those attributed to Posidippus in the Palatine Anthology, but then the act of selection may create a false sense of a poet's work, since it tends to prefer poems with timeless and elegantly presented themes.

This editio minor takes the inevitable next step of printing not only the epigrams of the Milan roll but all other works conventionally attributed to Posidippus, as well as a number that are disputed.<sup>2</sup> Printing all of these poems together is very convenient for the reader, who may not have access or inclination to consult editions of each of the

many sources of transmission (these are to be found in A-B's *Conspectus* as well as the *Index Fontium*). It also allows for easy and rapid comparison of material found in the new roll with what is found elsewhere. Though purists will deplore the psychological advantage this gives to claims for a Posidippean authorship of the Milan roll, there is enough coincidence of topic and style between the new and old poems to justify the claim.

Thanks to A-B these new epigrams are now accessible to a broad audience, and in an inexpensive paperback format priced at only 18 Euros. Included in the new edition are testimonia about Posidippus, who styled himself *epigrammatopoiios*, texts of the poems accompanied by an apparatus criticus that occasionally includes a few notes about interpretation in Latin and referrals to fuller discussion in the *editio princeps* when relevant, translations into Italian and English facing the Greek, as well as cross-references to other editions of the poems, and a complete index verborum. It would make a useful teaching tool for a variety of courses both in Greek and in translation. For example, the epigrams on ancient artists (nos. 62-70) could easily fit into an art history course or one on ancient aesthetics. Many of the new epigrams are about women's lives (nos. 42-59) and a number are dedicated to the Ptolemaic queen, Arsinoe II (nos. 36-39), others to the equestrian accomplishments of the Ptolemies, especially their queens (nos. 74, 78-80, 82, 87-88), and would work well in a gender course. The epigrams themselves are not difficult to read and the intact poems are suitable for undergraduates (though background and metrical considerations would have to be provided by the instructor). The format encourages rapid reading through the collection, and the range of topics from aesthetics to daily life to politics offers unexpected and important insights into Hellenistic epigram writing and collecting. This edition is well worth adding to one's library.

A-B print texts under the rubric of "epigrammata (et elegi)". Though most poems are clearly epigrams, two are of sufficient length to test the boundaries (no. \*114, a so-called epithalamium for Arsinoe II, from which 24 fragmentary lines survive, and no. 118, the 28+ line autobiographical poem). Poems in the edition are printed in the order in which they have survived, the oldest texts first; thus the 112 new epigrams of the Milan roll are privileged, since the papyrus should be assigned to around 200 BCE. They are followed by other papyrus texts: an unattested epigram on a statue of Arsinoe in a garden of the nymphs (no. \*113), the epithalamium for Arsinoe II and Ptolemy II (no. \*114), the poems on the Pharos (no. 115) and the temple of Aphrodite at Cape Zephyrium (no. 116), an optimistically attributed papyrus fragment that mentions Muses (no. \*117), the autobiographical epigram or elegy (no. 118) found on a wax tablet, then the poems cited in Athenaeus (nos. 119-122), and finally those from the Palatine (nos. 123-40) and Planudean (nos. 141-43) Anthologies. Poems clearly attributed to Posidippus are mixed in with those with contested attributions, which are prefaced by \*. The final section (nos. 143-50) contains testimonia about Posidippus' work that gives some sense of his range and interests. A-B's ordering effectively frontloads the poems found on papyri, whether the new roll or the Pharos epigram, and these provide a clear contrast to the poems preserved in other sources. Alexandria and the Ptolemies are much in evidence in the

unanthologized poems (120+ epigrams). The rest, no more than 22 if we accept everything printed as authored by Posidippus, tend to be sympotic and/or erotic, categories the anthologies seem to prefer.

The poems found only on papyrus have many fragmentary sections, especially nos. 1-4, 6-7, 9-12, 18, 24, 40-42, 69-70, 73, 77, 80-81, 92, 104, 106-112, 114, 117. These are commensurately more difficult to understand and to supplement with any degree of confidence. In the two years the Milan roll has been in the public domain, there have been numerous suggestions for emendation and correction. A-B take cognizance of many of the suggestions that have appeared, but much more work on the texts remains to be done. Therefore, A-B's edition can legitimately represent no more than a work in progress, and readers should treat the Greek in square brackets and the bracketed translations with caution, as potential but not inevitable restorations. The editors, however, certainly deserve our thanks for presenting this mainly new and important material so promptly and inexpensively, and what follows is not intended to slight their work so much as provide guidelines for readers who may not easily navigate the treacherous shoals that editions of fragmentary texts present.

In general, the Greek texts, when letters do not appear over dots or in brackets, are trustworthy. But dotted letters may not be (that is what the dot indicates). In an effort to make the texts as coherent as possible, the editors sometimes adapt and translate supplements that are intended to signal the permissible grammatical and syntactical limits, or to give the reader a clearer understanding of the point of the epigram. In some cases alternative supplements are suggested *exempli gratia* in the apparatus, but even when they are not, the supplements are not necessarily correct or the only possibilities. I give a few examples:

(1) At 4.5: [charis kain]ê appears both in the text and in the apparatus. It is also translated. But Austin's alternative supplement of [opsis terpn]ê is equally plausible, so the choice is intended as illustrative rather than definitive.

(2) No. 13.3 presents us with "an [engraved] Persian [lion]", though only Persian is really there, and the traces on either side of the lacuna (g, l) are by no means certain g[luptos li]s ho p ersês. The logic of the epigram does not require anything to be carved. The point seems to be that an image appears only when the stone is dry. Nor, if something is engraved, would a word like g[luptos necessarily have to have been written in the lacuna. It might be obvious from the subject that it was engraved.

(3) At no. 87, the editors restore hip[poi] and translate the line as "quando everamo ancora [cavalle], di Berenice macedone [ - o Pisati -] abbiamo ottenuto la corona olimpica" and in English: "When we were still [mares] we won Macedonian Berenice's Olympic crown, [O people of Pisa]." The effect of the restoration is to make the horses appear dead, reflecting back on their accomplishments when alive. (Efforts to explain the curious statement assume it to refer to an inscription on a statuary group.) A more reasonable restoration was suggested to me by Michael

Haslam: in place of Hip[poi] read pô[loi]. The sense would then be "while we were still [fillies]", or a reference to their precocious victory, in keeping with the accomplishments of their precocious owner/queen.

The desire to present a readable text is understandable and the editors have largely succeeded in rendering the Greek original accurately, but with the newly discovered epigrams the impulse sometimes leads to more restoration than is warranted, with sometimes confusing or incoherent results. Nos. 37, 42, 77, and 82 in particular are over-supplemented; the supplements to no. 66 in contrast effectively convey the point of the epigram. Again, two examples meant to be illustrative, not exhaustive:

(1) In no. 11. 3-4: restorations and translations give us in English "and in its engraved cavity it has Aglaia's] shapeliness [resembling topaz]." The Italian translates as "e ha nella cava incisione le forme di Agla[ia, simili] al [crisolito]." A figure "resembling topaz" is hard to imagine.

(2) No. 37 is a very fragmentary epigram commemorating a dedication to Arsinoe II of a lyre carried by a dolphin. The dolphin is described as "Arionios", that is like the dolphin that saved the archaic poet, Arion, from drowning. Here, unusually, Italian and English translations diverge: "A te, Arsinoe, questa lira ... un delfino come quello di Arione ha portata" must surely be correct, not "Arion's dolphin", who ought to have been long dead by the time of Arsinoe II. The supplements for lines 3-8 are problematic at best.

One of the most interesting features of the new roll is the arrangement of epigrams into at least ten titled sections, many of which are unattested in other epigram collections. Seven titles remain: *Oionoskôpika*, *Anathematika*, *Andriantopoiika*, *Hippika*, *Nauagika*, *Iamatika*, and *Tropoi*. Two are restored, and for the last, only the blank space to the left margin indicates that a title would have been written. In their edition A-B chose to treat each epigram individually, and, while preserving the order of the poems in the roll, they omit the section titles, though they do print them as a list on p. 21. As study of the Milan roll progresses, it is becoming clear that the epigrams in each section have a complex interrelationship with the section title: for example, *Oionoskôpika* is the title that precedes nos. 21-35, and appropriately these are a series of epigrams that play off of the challenge of interpreting signs correctly. It is important for the reader not only to read the poems in sequence but to be aware of the section in which each occurs and of the relationship of the individual poem to its fellows in the sequence. For example, in no. 28 the omen is a presbus, a word that means "old man" but also is the name of a bird, "wren". The editors reject the latter meaning, though they do note it. In fact, the point of the epigram would seem to require the reader to take cognizance of the fact that in a section entitled "Auguries" *klaiôn presbus* is deliberately ambiguous.<sup>3</sup> Again, no. 92 belongs to a sequence entitled "*Nauagika*" or "Shipwrecks". All of the other victims of shipwreck in these epigrams are dead. But the editors restore 92 in such a way that the man who succeeds in swimming away from his doomed ship is saved by a god. In fact, it is

more likely that this man too, in spite of escaping from his ship is also drowned.<sup>4</sup>

To conclude: this very fruitful collaboration of Italian and Anglo-Saxon scholarship has produced for general consumption a most useful and accessible edition of a poet who was previously known only through a handful of epigrams. We are in debt to Austin and Bastianini for this promptly produced volume of mainly new poems that are important for a wide variety of readers. For Latinists interested in the construction of poetry books and those working in the Hellenistic period it is an essential text. For anyone who teaches courses on the ancient world, these epigrams are suited to a variety of contexts. This edition of Posidippus is a valuable addition to the poetic repertory of antiquity.

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### Notes:

1. *Posidippo di Pella Epigrammi (P. Mil. Vogl. VIII 309)*, edited by Guido Bastianini and Claudio Gallazzi with the collaboration of Colin Austin (Milan: LED, 2001) is a lavish and expensive edition that includes the Greek text on CD as well as two facsimiles -- one in full color, the other enlarged infrared.
2. For example, no. \*127 is the epigram on a *hippopornos* that parodies a line of Callimachus -- *hAthena* 2; it is attributed either to Asclepiades or Posidippus in the Palatine Anthology.
3. As the editors note, the point was made by D. Petain in *ZPE* 140 (2002).
4. R. Thomas, "Drowned in the Tide: The Nauagika and Some 'Problems' in Augustan Poetry" in Acosta-Hughes, B., and Kosmetatou, E. (eds.), *Labored in Papyrus Leaves -- Perspectives on an Epigram Collection Attributed to Posidippus (P. Mil. Vogl. VIII 309)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

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