

Browne, Gerald Michael

The pursuit of papyrological fleas

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THE PURSUIT OF PAPHYROLOGICAL FLEAS*

“On a d’abord tenté d’esquisser une définition de la papyrologie en tant que science. On a évoqué à ce propos l’histoire des découvertes et des travaux qui ont permis à la papyrologie de se constituer en discipline autonome; on a abordé ensuite divers problèmes relatifs aux limites chronologiques et géographiques de la recherche papyrologique, aux questions linguistiques, au support matériel de l’écriture, et—point d’une importance capitale—à la distinction entre papyrus littéraires et papyrus documentaires. À ce propos, on a insisté sur l’intérêt majeur des papyrus documentaires pour la définition de la discipline. La papyrologie, c’est d’abord et avant tout la publication, l’interprétation et l’étude des *documents* qui permettent de saisir sur le vif la réalité historique de l’Égypte, monarchie hellénistique et province de l’Empire.”

With these words, Professor J. Modrzejewski describes how he introduced a course of his in papyrology.¹ For those of us accustomed to think of papyrology in terms of literary remains as well as of documents, his statements emphasizing the overriding importance of documents may cause dismay. But what he says is nonetheless true, however uncomfortable it is to hear it. Since literary papyri are much less common than documentary, it follows that the latter will be the main concern of the papyrologist.

Decipherment is the prime aim of our discipline, and everything—even the content of the piece in question—becomes of secondary importance. The task is to prepare an edition with as much positivism as feasible, and the papyrologist should proceed with equal detachment to a routine tax receipt and to a hitherto-unknown play of Menander. Only with this detachment, with this objectivity, can he adequately discharge his duties.

What I have said, however, does not imply that papyrology is an historical

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¹ J. Méléze-Modrzejewski, *Papyrologie et histoire des droits de l’Antiquité* (rapport sur les conférences de l’année 1972–1973), *Annuaire 1973–1974 de l’École pratique des Hautes Études*. IV^e Section: *Sciences historiques et philologiques*, 106^e année, Paris, 1974, pp. 229–230.

discipline or a branch of the study of ancient law. Some would argue that it is, but these scholars overlook the fact that papyrology must have a philological base. The primary concern is with historical or legal documents, but this does not make the papyrologist an historian or a legal scholar. In order to perform his functions properly, he must be a philologist, intimately involved with the problems of editing texts, with *Editionstechnik*.

Of course, it is not only with his own texts that a papyrologist deals. In studying the corpus of published papyri, he frequently comes upon pieces which he finds defective for some reason or other. If he is successful at removing the defect, that is, if he can emend the text as edited, then he is performing a function as important as publishing his own papyri.

This notion of the importance of emending, or correcting, previously edited texts emphasizes the philological basis of papyrology. The papyrologist must be a textual critic, and to describe his activities I can do no better than quote some statements made by Professor A. E. Housman in his brilliant paper, *The Application of Thought to Textual Criticism*: "A textual critic engaged upon his business is not at all like Newton investigating the motions of the planets: he is much more like a dog hunting for fleas. If a dog hunted for fleas on mathematical principles, basing his researches on statistics of area and population, he would never catch a flea except by accident. They require to be treated as individuals; and every problem which presents itself to the textual critic must be regarded as possibly unique."²

With these words in mind, I propose to discuss some passages requiring correction among the papyrus documents that have thus far been published. A former teacher of mine, Warren E. Blake, was thinking of Housman when he described textual criticism as "the pursuit of philological fleas." Since papyrology is intimately concerned with textual criticism, I may perhaps be excused for giving my lecture the title "The Pursuit of Papyrological Fleas."

The impetus for my remarks comes from the magisterial treatise of H. C. Youtie, *The Textual Criticism of Documentary Papyri: Prolegomena* (2nd ed.: BICS Supplement 33, 1974). To this work as well as to Professor Youtie's numerous articles (now conveniently assembled in his *Scriptiunculae*³) I refer those who may wish to pursue the subject in greater detail.

We must remember that it is only when he is confronted by the papyrus itself or by a good photograph of it that the papyrologist is actually engaged in deciphering an autograph manuscript. In the numerous editions of published papyri, we often find only transcripts without photographs, and although these transcripts are supposed accurately to reflect the original, they often resemble the efforts of Byzantine scribes struggling heroically with copying an ancient text.

² *Proceedings of the Classical Association* 18 (1922), pp. 68-69 (= J. Diggle and F. R. D. Goodyear, eds., *The Classical Papers of A. E. Housman*, Cambridge, 1972, Vol. 3, p. 1059).

³ *Scriptiunculae*, Amsterdam, Vol. 1: 1973, Vol. 2: 1973, Vol. 3: 1975; *Scriptiunculae posteriores*, Bonn, Vol. 1: 1981, Vol. 2: 1982.

Particularly satisfying is the experience that comes when one can correct an editor's transcript without recourse to the original. The editor has transcribed correctly, but his interpretation of what he sees is at fault. To give an example: A scholar once published a fragment of a paramone contract from the Indiana collection (*Class. Phil.* 43, 1948, 111 = SB VI 9094). In texts of this type, a loan is involved, but the debtor, instead of paying interest, stipulates that a member of his family shall remain in the house of the creditor and serve him for a specified period of time. In line 8 of the Indiana papyrus, the editor reads παντ|αχῆ κατ' ἐγ<γ>ύ[ην, and in his note he writes: "this restoration is questionable, but compare P. Mich.V 355.11 κατὰ τὸν νόμον πανταχῆι. A Michigan text published after the Indiana piece, P. Mich.X 587, allows the critic to improve upon this passage. Also a paramone contract, the Michigan text contains the provision that a female servant whose work will discharge the interest is not permitted to "absent herself night or day from the house of Harmiusis [the creditor] without his knowledge but is to follow him everywhere throughout Egypt (πανταχῆι κατ' [A]ἴγυπτον line 16)." The vigilant critic is immediately struck by the similarity of the phrase πανταχῆι κατ' [A]ἴγυπτον with the phrase παντ|αχῆ κατ' ἐγ<γ>ύ[ην, especially when the latter is stripped of editorial embellishment: παντ|αχῆ κατ' ἐγυ[. The last word must obviously be restored as Ἐγυ[πτον (= Αἴγυπτον). The writing of αι as ε is too common to require discussion.⁴ Incidentally, we can also correct the phrase κατὰ τὸν νόμον πανταχῆι, which the editor cited in his note: to make it conform to the pattern of πανταχῆ κατ' Αἴγυπτον, we need only change the accent from νόμον to νομόν. One wonders whether the editor of the Indiana papyrus would have hit upon the correct solution if his parallel had been correctly accented in its publication.⁵

Here the editor was misled by the parallels. At times, there are no parallels available, and one must transcribe as accurately as one can, in the hope that, if similar passages come to light, his text can then be read. Here I think of P.Hamb.I 30, a contract of loan which contains a stipulation about the period of the loan. In the published transcript, this stipulation has the following reading: ἐπί τε τὸν κ[...].την καὶ ἐφ' ὃν ἐὰν .ε..ην ..ε...[... χρο]νον (lines 18–19). The editor has done his best, but the absence of precise parallels did not permit him to decode the cursive script in which such texts are usually written. We are now more fortunate: two Michigan papyri (X 585 and XII 635) have subsequently been published, both involving loans and both containing phrases highly relevant for our purposes: 585. 15–16 ἐπί τε τὸν κατ' αὐτῆς⁶ [[χρο]νον] καὶ ἐφ' ὃν ἐὰν δέον ᾖ⁷ ἐνοικεῖν χρόνον "both for the time stipulated by the contract and for as long as lodging is neces-

⁴ Cf. F. T. Gignac, *A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, Milan, 1976, Vol. 1, pp. 192–193.

⁵ See P. Mich. X 587. 16n. and BL VI 151.

⁶ Read αὐτῆν.

⁷ Koine for ᾖ: see P. Mich. X 585. 16n.

sary"; 635. 14–15 ἐπεὶ τε τοῦ κατ' αὐτῆς κεφ[αλ]αίου⁸ καὶ ἐφ' [ὄν ἐάν] δέον ἦ ἐπενοικῖν χρόνον "both for the duration of the loan established by the contract and for as long as additional lodging is necessary". A comparison of the Michigan papyri with that from Hamburg shows that the latter must read ἐπὶ τε τὸν κ[ατὰ] αὐτὴν καὶ ἐφ' ὄν ἐάν δέον ἦν ἐπενοικ[ι]κεῖν χρόνον⁹.

Such cases, where correction can be done without seeing the original, are rare. Usually the editor has been unsuccessful in deciphering a passage, and we need access to the papyrus or to an accurate reproduction if our corrections are to carry conviction.

The critic is continually on the lookout for the unusual, the bizarre, the incongruous: anything that is out of the ordinary is suspect and must be tested. Thus when a Wisconsin papyrus, P. Wisc. I 30, appears with the word κάφα (Col. ii 9), a Laconian spelling for the common word σκάφη, we have to test the reading, especially since it is elsewhere attested only in Hesychius (see LSJ); here we recall Martin West's dictum: "you can always find something in Hesychius".¹⁰ Now it is true that new words do appear in papyri, and the sands of Egypt have enriched our knowledge of Greco-Roman koine, but alas, a glance at a photograph of the papyrus shows that Laconian influence is not demonstrable in the Wisconsin text.¹¹ The photo shows a clear, though slightly abraded, *sigma* in front of the *kappa*. What follows the *phi* is by no means clear, but the traces are at least compatible with *eta*. Therefore, the text offers the common word σκάφη, not—unfortunately for lexicographers—its Laconian equivalent.

Later on in the same papyrus, we come upon a phrase which appears thus in the edition: τύλη οἰδίων ἐσφραγισμένη (Col. ii 18–19) "a closed mattress with sheepswool" (editor's translation). The editor's note is illuminating: "οἰδιον is used only once as a diminutive of οἶς by the grammarian Theognostus from the ninth century A.D. (*Canones* 121). Naturally, we are not dealing here with lambs, but with the wool of young sheep, used to stuff the cushion/mattress." A similar expression occurs elsewhere in the same text: σάκκος συνέργων ἐσφραγισμένος (Col. iii 1) "a sealed bag with woven materials." The editor is certainly right when he says that the mattress must be filled with wool and not sheep, but it is doubtful whether οἰδιον can have this extended meaning. An examination of the photograph shows that the reading is by no means as certain as the editor's transcription suggests. ιδιον is correctly read, but the preceding letter is raised too high above the line for an *omicron* and resembles rather a *rho*. Before this letter is a lacuna sufficient for one letter. I therefore suggest [ἐ]ριδίων as a much more likely reading than οἰδίων. The word ἐρίδιον "wool" fits the requirements of meaning and is amply attested

⁸ Read ἐπὶ τε τὸν κατ' αὐτὴν κεφαλαῖον: cf. P. Mich. XII 635. 14n.

⁹ See P. Mich. X 585. 15–16n. and BL VI 47.

¹⁰ M. L. West, *Hesiod, Theogony*, Oxford 1966, p. 238 (ad 243).

¹¹ E. Boswinkel and P. J. Sijpesteijn, *Greek Papyri*, Amsterdam, 1968, Plate 33.

in the papyri; it is also freely used in the plural (cf. e.g. BGU I 48.12-13 περὶ τῶν ἐριδίων).¹²

As is well known, official documents tend to be written in stereotyped formulas. Unless the scribe simply blunders, he will follow what convention dictates. And the editor had better know what that convention is if he has any hope of disentangling the various series of *Verschleifungen* which we charitably call handwriting. A papyrus from Bologna, P.Bon.30, had been bothering me for several years. It is an ordinary tax receipt, but its transcription is disquieting. In the edition it appears as follows (lines 3-7):

Διέγ(ραψε)

Παπῶς Κοαελ() Παπνεβτῦνι

5 Σοκ[έως ?] λαξὸ(ς)¹³ ὑ(πὲρ) χωμάτων

δευτ(έρου) (ἔτους) Τεβτύνεως

ἀργ(υρίου) (δραχμᾶς) ἕξ (τετρώβολον) (γίνονται) (δραχμαὶ) ἕξ (τετρώβολον)

This is a receipt for the dike tax, and a perusal of the other receipts for dike tax quickly shows that the Bologna papyrus presents striking anomalies. The usual arrangement for the first part of the receipt is διέγραψε + tax collector (in dative) + payer (in nominative). The Bologna text places the tax payer before the collector and thus reverses the normal order. It is also surprising that the tax collector, according to the editor's interpretation, is referred to as a stonecutter (λαξός: see footnote 13). Granted that a stonecutter could be impressed into the office of collector, one wonders why his trade, instead of his official position, should be mentioned in his title. Finally, that the name Κοαελ() is unattested elsewhere does nothing to relieve one's feelings of uneasiness about the text as edited.

I procured a photograph of the papyrus but for several years could not get beyond the editor's text. The hand is extremely cursive, but repeated examination enabled me to see the writing in such a way as to eliminate the peculiarities mentioned before. I here offer my revision of the passage in question (lines 3-5), followed by a translation and brief commentary:

διέγ(ραψε)

Παπῶς καὶ μετ(όχοις) Παπνεβτῦνιο(ς)¹⁴

5 Σοκέω(ς) λαξ(ός) ὑ(πὲρ) χωμάτων, κτλ.

"Papnebtunis son of Sokeus, stonecutter, has paid to Papos and his associates, for the dike tax," etc.

The name Παπῶς is a scribal mistake for the dative Παπῶτι; similar confusions exist in other tax receipts and should not disturb us. Egyptian was not an inflected language like Greek, and it regarded prefixes, not suffixes, of prime importance.

¹² See ZPE 5 (1970), pp. 23-24 and BL VI 72.

¹³ Ed.'s note: "1. λαξῶ."

¹⁴ Read Παπῶτι ... Παπνεβτῦνις.

Hence names often appear in the nominative when we expect an oblique case; cf. e.g. P.Tebt.II 356.3 δι(έγραψεν) Ὀρσηῆς καὶ Ὀρίων¹⁵ καὶ μετόχοις.

For the editor's Κοκελ() I have read καὶ μετ(όχοις). The papyrus has . Often καὶ is written as , and H. C. Youtie notes editorial confusion of alpha/mu and lambda/tau.¹⁶ The mu has a collapsed appearance, but it is basically of the form that occurs elsewhere on the same papyrus. As for the tau, the right side of the crossbar leads directly into a stroke of abbreviation. The shape of the tau may also be paralleled in the same papyrus. A similar, though less cursive, piece of writing appears in a tax receipt from the Brooklyn Museum, which I edited in *BASP* 4 (1967), pp. 23–26:  μετ(όχοις).

I have read Παπνεβτῦνι(ς) for the editor's Παπνεβτῦνι. After the *iota* the papyrus has a clear dot above the line, and this I interpret as *omicron*, raised to indicate abbreviation. Since the endings -ιος and -ις interchange freely in the papyri,¹⁷ the writing of Παπνεβτῦνιος for Παπνεβτῦνις is readily understandable.

About λαξό(ς) in line 5: the papyrus has λαξ^o with the *omicron* raised to signal abbreviation. The editor of the papyrus corrected this to λαξϝ. That the nominative was intended is clearly demonstrated by a fragmentary receipt on the other side of the papyrus. This receipt, in a different hand from that of P. Bon. 30, was briefly described by the editor and was not transcribed. Although only the ends of lines remain, much of the text can be restored without difficulty. I offer a transcript of it here, with translation and a few notes:

[ἔτους x Τιβερίου Κλαυδίου Καίσαρος
[Σεβαστοῦ Γερμανικοῦ Αὐτοκράτ]ορος
[month day διέγ(ραψεν) Παπνεβτῦνις Σοκέως] λαξός
[] Τ]εβτῦνις¹⁸

5 [ἀργυρίου δραχμὰς τέσσαρας ὀβολοὺς ἕ]ξ, (γίνονται)
(δραχμαὶ) δ (ὀβολοὶ) ε.

“Year x of Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus Imperator (month day). Papnebtunis son of Sokeus, stonemason, has paid to the account of Tebtunis ... four drachmas of silver, six obols, equal 4 dr. 6 ob.”

This text presents two anomalies: there is no room for mention of the tax collector and his associates in line 3, and in line 5 we expect the tax to be 6 dr. 4 ob., not 4 dr. 6 ob. As it stands, the receipt could not be considered valid, and so it was turned over and the text published as P. Bon. 30 was inscribed. Despite its defects, the fragment displays λαξός without abbreviation in line 3. This shows that the same person is involved in both receipts, and since it is nominative, it indicates that this

¹⁵ Read Ὀρσηῆτι καὶ Ὀρίωνι.

¹⁶ *Textual Criticism* 68.

¹⁷ D. J. Georgacas, *Classical Philology* 43 (1948), pp. 243–260.

¹⁸ Read Τεβτῦνιος.

person is the taxpayer, not the collector. We therefore can guarantee the resolution of λαξ^ο in P. Bon. 30 into λαξό(ς), and so we must assume that Παπνεβτύνιο(ς) stands for Παπνεβτύνις. This in turn leads inevitably to the assumption that Παπῶς is to be corrected to Παπῶτι.¹⁹

At times the editor's text offers no overt novelties, and it is only accident that compels us to attempt to correct it. Number 3 of the Leiden Ostraca is assigned by the editor to Syene in Upper Egypt and is tentatively dated to 2 September 15 A.D. It takes the following form in the publication:²⁰

Πλάντας καὶ Πανίσκο[ς]
 ἐπι(τηρηταί) ἐρη(ῶς) πύλ(ης) Σοή(νης)
 Πικῶτι ν(εωτέρω) χείρειν. Ἔσχομεν ὑπ(έρ) παρουσί(ας)
 κρ(ιθῆς) τ ἡμισυ. Λβ// Θὼθ ε̄.

5 Πλάντ(ας) Πικῶτι.

Editor's translation: "Plantas und Paniskos, Aufpasser des Heiligen Tores von Syene, grüssen Pikos den Jüngeren. Wir haben für die Anwesenheit eine halbe Artabe Gerste erhalten. Im 2. Jahr am 5. Thoth. Plantas dem Pikos."

When I read this for the first time, I collated it with a published photograph,²¹ felt somewhat uneasy, but could not make any improvement on the editor's text. Once again, the hand is extremely cursive, and great caution is necessary in decipherment. Later I came upon another receipt also issued by Plantas and Paniscus: O. Tait Ashm. 68. It was written on 30 March of year 2 of an unspecified emperor, but its editor had assigned it to Septimius Severus (i.e. 193/4 A.D.) and had indicated its provenance as Thebes. In the edition this ostrakon appears as follows:

Πλαντῶς καὶ Πανίσκο(ς) ἀπαιτ(ηταί) κρ(ιθῆς) γεγή(ματος)
 λαS Ὀρο(υ)²² Πετρω(ύ)σιος) Ὀρο(υ) διὰ Φρεμεῦτο(ς) χ(είρειν).
 Ἔσχομεν εἰς πρόσθ(εσιν) κρ(ιθῆς) τ d. Λβ//
 Μεσο(ρή) λ ... σ(εσ)η(μείωμαι).

If the same people are involved as collectors, there are serious discrepancies: obviously one text cannot have been written in Syene in 15 A.D., while the other was drafted in Thebes in 194. I had the opportunity to examine the second ostrakon in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, and, comparing it with a photograph of the Leiden ostrakon, I found that the two receipts were drawn up by the same scribe. My comparison also allowed me to revise the reading of the Leiden ostrakon. As I have said, the text is very cursive, but fortunately the Ashmolean piece is some-

¹⁹ See ZPE 6 (1970), pp. 266-269 and BL VI 23. Note that I have altered my transcript of the text on the back of P. Bon. 30.

²⁰ This is the *editio princeps*, reprinted as SB X 10311; for the second edition, O. Leid., see below, n. 23.

²¹ Boswinkel-Sijpesteijn, *Greek Papyri*, Plate 53b.

²² Ed.'s note: "Read Ὀρω."

what easier to decipher, and it acts as a control on the Leiden text. I here present my revision of the latter:

Πλαντᾶς καὶ Πανίσκο(ς)
 ἀπαιτ(ηταὶ) κρ(ιθῆς) γενή(ματος) λαS
 Πικῶτι ὁ(μοίως) χ(αίρειν). ἔσχ(ομεν) εἰς πρόσθ(εσιν)
 κρ(ιθῆς) = ἦμισυ. Lβ// Θῶθ ἔ.

5 Πλ(αντᾶς) σεση(μείωμαι). (2nd. hd.) Πχγ(ίσκος) σεση(μείωμαι).*

"Plantas and Paniscus, collectors of barley of the crop of the 31st year, to Pikos son of Pikos, greeting. We have received as an additional deposit one half artaba of barley. Year 2, Thoth 5. I, Plantas, have signed. (2nd hd.) I, Paniscus, have signed."

Both the Ashmolean ostrakon and that from Leiden, as now revised, were drawn up in the second regnal year of an unnamed emperor, and both record arrears from the 31st year of another emperor, also unnamed. Only by assigning year 31 to Commodus (i.e. 190/191 A.D.) and year 2 to Septimius Severus (193/194) can we reach a satisfactory interpretation of the two ostraca. The only other emperor in the Roman period to have a 31st year is Augustus (1/2 A.D.). But if year 31 falls in his reign, we must assign year 2 to Tiberius (15/16), as did the editor of the Leiden text. This will mean that the arrears were outstanding for 15 years, a surprisingly long period. Further, on paleographical grounds, the writing on the ostraca corresponds more closely to the extremely rapid style of the late second century than to that of the early first.

The revised transcription of the Leiden ostrakon eliminates the reference to Syene: what the editor had read as ἐπιτ(ηρηταὶ) ἐρ(ᾶς) πύλ(ης) Σοή(νης) turns out in fact to be ἀπαιτ(ηταὶ) κρ(ιθῆς) γενή(ματος) λαS. The provenance of this text and of the Ashmolean receipt is Thebes, as is shown by the fact that the ἀπαιτηταὶ mentioned in both function as independent collectors, according to the regular practice at Thebes. In Syene, the ἀπαιτηταὶ always appear as representatives of the ἐπιτηρηταὶ ἐρᾶς πύλης Σοήνης. The designation of the tax as εἰς πρόσθ(εσιν) also restricts the provenance to Thebes, since this surtax is found only in that city. But this was not apparent to the original editor, since he mistakenly interpreted the cursive script and transcribed ὑπ(ἔρ) παρουσί(ας) instead of εἰς πρόσθ(εσιν).²³

These last two examples, the Bologna papyrus and the Leiden ostrakon, have had their text drastically altered. This alteration will cause great discomfort to some. If transcripts are so defective, then what is the poor non-papyrologist to do? He may need to make use of published papyri, and in order to make use of them properly, he must assume that they are accurately transcribed. The last two examples,

²³ See ZPE 4 (1969) pp. 193-195 and BL VI 164, as well as the revision subsequently published as O. Leid. 266, where the dot has been removed from πρόσθ(εσιν) in line 3, and Πίανίσκος is read instead of Πχγ(ίσκος) in line 5, without indication of a change of hand.

as well as those previously discussed, show that accurate transcripts cannot always be counted on. Editors are only human, and they make mistakes. This vapid generalization is of little comfort to the non-papyrologist, but it is all that can be offered. We cannot say *a priori* that the titans of our discipline, men like Wilcken, Youtie, Grenfell and Hunt, are necessarily in every case more reliable than the amateur who dabbles in the art when the spirit moves him. In general, of course, the great papyrologists have had much more experience than the amateur, and so the overall performance is better. But we are concerned with particular cases, and each particular case must be judged on its own merits. Unfortunately, only another papyrologist is competent to be the judge, and then not in all circumstances. He may accidentally have just read a text which enables him to correct the edition that he is now perusing. Or he may have acquired some fact which was not at the disposal of the previous editor, and this fact allows him to improve upon the text. In the case of the Bologna papyrus, it was the discovery that $\lambda\alpha\zeta\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ appears on the back that triggered the decipherment, and in the case of the Leiden ostrakon, the fact that I had found Plantas and Paniscus elsewhere, in a more readable text, permitted me to make the sweeping revisions which I set forth earlier. To judge from my own experience, such corrections are the exception, not the rule. Often I have read a published text, felt vague feelings of uneasiness about it, but have been unable to find the reason for the uneasiness. I suspect that the text is wrong, but it may take years before I know whether my suspicions are justified.

If these generalities have any point, it is to urge caution on the users of papyrus editions. As I said a while ago, there is a great deal of similarity between the modern papyrologist and the Byzantine scribe. Neither the former's transcript nor the latter's apograph can be safely regarded *a priori* as a faithful reproduction of the autograph. No one would dream of considering the Palatinus as a totally accurate record of the *ipsissima verba* of Lysias. But people tend to be more charitable in dealing with editions of papyri, perhaps because the editions were produced, not in the dim cells of some long-forgotten monastery near Constantinople, but in a well-equipped library, with all that contemporary science can offer. And then, of course, the modern scholar, with his doctorate and vast learning, is—one feels—vastly superior to the Byzantine copyist. But—most important—the modern transcript of a papyrus is made from the original itself; it ought (such is the implicit assumption) to be better than the medieval apograph, which is centuries removed from the original. From what I have said, from the examples which I have adduced, we must abandon these comforting assumptions: the papyrologist is a scribe, a learned one perhaps, but all the more dangerous for that reason.

Not wishing to end on tendentious platitudes, I turn to one last example, a papyrus published as No. 2116 of the Berlin papyri (BGU XI). This is a contract of loan written in the twelfth year of Tiberius (25/26 A.D.). Most of the contract is in Greek, but the creditor has used the Latin alphabet for his subscription. For a papyrologist skilled in Greek, Latin hands can cause acute embarrassment; and

