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Early Greek lyric and Hellenistic epigram: New evidence from recently published papyri

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Jerzy Danielewicz

**EARLY GREEK LYRIC
AND HELLENISTIC EPIGRAM: NEW EVIDENCE
FROM RECENTLY PUBLISHED PAPYRI**

THE OBJECTIVE OF MY PAPER is not so much to present the most important texts of Greek lyric and Hellenistic epigram which have been edited recently (although it seems reasonable to recall some crucial pieces, at least in translation), as to demonstrate how they have influenced the scholarly debate and to what extent they enriched, or even changed, our understanding of these and kindred forms of poetry. As is clear from this preliminary statement, I fully subscribe to the opinion expressed by Michael Haslam¹ twenty-one years ago during the twentieth International Congress of Papyrologists in Copenhagen that accessions to the already known corpus not only are valuable in and of themselves, but also make a difference to what was there before, and the process is not a purely cumulative one, but much more dynamic.

It is a truism that not all the finds are of equal impact. In the cases I am going to discuss here, we are indeed fortunate to deal with pieces by the leading authors in each poetic form, and, moreover, the ones which both raise fascinating questions and add new data to our knowlegde

¹M. W. HASLAM, 'The contribution of papyrology to the study of Greek literature: archaic and Hellenistic poetry', [in:] A. BÜLOW-JACOBSEN (ed.). *Proceedings of the 20th International Congress of Papyrologists, Copenhagen, 23-29 August, 1992*, Copenhagen 1994, pp. 98-105, at 98.

about the history and poetics of the genres in question. In this respect, the beginning of this century is undoubtedly a lucky continuation of the previous decades which gave us such gems as the Cologne Archilochus, Stesichorus' *Geryoneid* and 'Thebaid' or Simonides' elegiac fragments.

The recent lyric texts of greatest importance are: the Cologne Sappho (first published in 2004 by Michael Gronewald and Robert W. Daniel in *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*) and the Oxford Archilochus, published by Dirk Obbink in 2005 in *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* LXIX). As for the famous 'new Posidippus', the Milan collection of his epigrams (112 in total, including some scanty fragments at the end of the manuscript) was in fact known to its future editors, Guido Bastianini and Claudio Gallazzi, as well as to their collaborator Colin Austin, already in the early 1990s, but the preparation of the excellent commented *editio princeps* took them almost a decade, so the book did not reach the readers until the beginning of this century.

Let us start with the Cologne **Sappho**. The recently published papyrus (inv. no. 21351+21376), by far the oldest text of Sappho we possess so far, gave us parts of two poems by that poet, one quite new and one overlapping with lines 11–22 of a much later and more severely damaged manuscript of Sappho (*P. Oxy.* 1787, now in Oxford). After these, in the Cologne Sappho there follow several verses in non-Lesbian metre by another poet. Since the configuration of fragments provided by the above-mentioned manuscripts is somewhat complicated, I present a diagram clarifying their relative position. For the sake of clarity, I add the catchy terms with which they are sometimes referred to by scholars (Dirk Obbink and others).

SAPPHO

P. Köln inv. 21351+21376
(early 3rd c. BC)

P. Oxy. 1787 fr. 1 and 2
(2nd/3rd c. AD)

New Fragment (lines 1–8)

'Success' Poem = Sappho fr. 58.1–10 Voigt

The 'Tithonus poem', lines 9–20 = Sappho fr. 58.11–22 Voigt

Continuation 1 (non-Lesbian)
Another poem begins

Continuation 2 = Sappho fr. 58.23–26 Voigt
Final lines of one and the same poem?

As stated above, what is absolutely new, are the eight initial lines of the Cologne papyrus. Nevertheless, given the fact that the ‘New Fragment’ is very lacunose whereas two-thirds of the ‘Tithonus poem’ with the new papyri readings preserving earlier portions of lines can be restored almost entirely, the value of the part containing the latter piece seems to be at least equally great. Actually, it is undoubtedly ‘das alt-neue Sappho-Gedicht’ (to use the witty label coined by Péter Mayer in his most recent article²) that raised essential discussions not only about Sappho, but also, more generally, about Greek lyric in antiquity.

Before I expatiate upon some specific issues let me quote – for convenience – the ‘Tithonus poem’ in Martin L. West’s translation (published in his 2005 article in the *Times Literary Supplement*)³ which is based on his own restorations of the text and as a whole seems to be very close to the sense of the original. I should like to apologise myself for such quotations of well-known poems to those colleagues, present in this hall, who are experts in the subject and even contributed to the reading and interpretation of the manuscripts in question. West’s translation reads:

Pursue the violet-laden Muses’ handsome gifts,
 my children, and the loud-voiced lyre so dear to song:
 But me – my skin which once was soft is withered now
 by age, my hair has turned to white which once was black,
 my heart has been weighed down, my knees give no support
 which once were nimble in the dance like little fawns.
 How often I lament these things. But what to do?
 No being that is human can escape old age.
 For people used to think that Dawn with rosy arms
 and loving murmurs took Tithonus fine and young
 to reach the edges of the earth; yet still grey age
 in time did seize him, though his consort cannot die.

The Cologne papyrus alerted the scholars to the problem of the poem’s length and division. The appearance of a different text in place of lines 1–10

² P. MAYER, ‘Tithonos und seine “unsterbliche Gattin” in dem alt-neuem Sappho-Gedicht (58,11–22V; P.Köln 21351+21376 vv. 9–20)’, *Hermes* 141/2 (2013), pp. 218–223.

³ M. L. WEST, ‘A new Sappho poem’, *Times Literary Supplement*, June 24, 2005, p. 8.

of the Oxyrhynchus papyrus is a strong argument for the view that with line 9 (11 in the Oxyrhynchus papyrus) another poem begins – the one called ‘Tithonus’. In fact, this is now a generally accepted opinion. Thus, Gallavotti’s intuition (1947)⁴ has been finally proven correct by the new find.

The question of the ‘Tithonus poem’s’ termination turned out to be more problematic. In the Cologne papyrus it ends with line 20, whereas in the *P. Oxy.* the poem is extended and probably ends four lines later. Before the recent find, these four lines had been considered as the outright conclusion of Sappho’s composition on old age, in which she, as the feminine speaker, expressed her personal creed (‘una personale professione di fede’ – to use Salvatore Nicosia’s characteristic formulation).⁵ After the Cologne papyrus had been published, some scholars (West, Luppe, Di Benedetto, Bernsdorff), providing various arguments, suggested that lines 23–26 of fr. 58 Voigt belong to another poem of Sappho, whether longer than four lines (West’s *abrosyna* poem)⁶ or possibly of this modest length (Di Benedetto’s ‘tetrastico’).

The debate was not confined to the specific case of one of Sappho’s poems, but touched upon more general issues, such as the structure of archaic lyric poems and the place of mythical examples in their composition. One of the questions provoked by the ‘Tithonus poem’ was whether a mythological example at the very end of a piece makes it unusually abrupt and thus contradicts the rules of refined circular composition with the mythical part in the middle. The concerns were raised – in spite of the evidence provided by the manuscript itself⁷ – already by its *editores prin-*

⁴ See C. GALLAVOTTI, *Saffo e Alceo. Testimonianze e frammenti*, Naples 1957 (2nd ed.; 1st ed. 1947), p. III.

⁵ S. NICOSIA, *Tradizione testuale diretta e indiretta dei poeti di Lesbo*, Rome 1976, p. 116. In what follows I partly use the convenient recapitulation of the state of the art by K. VANDONI, ‘Considerazioni sul «tetrastico»’, [in:] A. ALONI (ed.), *Nuove acquisizioni di Saffo e della lirica greca. Per il testo di P. Köln inv. 21351 + 21376 e P. Oxy. 1787*, Alessandria 2008, pp. 121–122.

⁶ See M. L. WEST, ‘The New Sappho’, *ZPE* 101 (2005), pp. 1–9. According to this scholar, the composition was longer and incorporated also fr. 59 Voigt.

⁷ Cf. G. LIBERMAN, ‘L’édition alexandrine de Sappho’, [in:] G. BASTIANINI & A. CASANOVA (eds.), *I papiri di Saffo e di Alceo. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di studi, Firenze, 8–9, 2006*, Studi e Testi di Papirologia, n. s. 9, Florence 2007, pp. 41–65, at 50 n. 43.

cipes, Gronewald and Daniel.⁸ The objection that the mythical example as *illustrans* is not followed by any *illustrandum* has been partly refuted by Hans Bernsdorff⁹ who demonstrated that such ‘offene Gedichtsschlüsse’ are not exceptional in Greek lyric poetry although in the corpus of the preserved texts this technique is attested here for the first time. Still, Lowel Edmunds¹⁰ emphasises the need of taking into account the prevalent conventions of Greek lyric and argues for the A–B–A structure with the return from the myth to the present situation at the poem’s end.

Some proponents of the view that the ‘Tithonus poem’ continued until line 26, as preserved in the later Oxyrhynchus papyrus, give another explanation of its ‘truncation’ in the Cologne papyrus. Scholars like Magnani,¹¹ Burzacchini,¹² and Lundon,¹³ basing on Gronewald’s and Daniel’s suggestion,¹⁴ hold that the lack of the final four verses in the Cologne papyrus may be due to the character of the early Hellenistic anthology of Sappho’s poetry from which this papyrus is derived. In their opinion, that anthology may have contained shorter versions of her songs than those included in the 500 years later Oxyrhynchus collection which followed the standard Alexandrian edition of Sappho.

⁸ M. GRONEWALD & R. W. DANIEL, ‘Ein neuer Sappho-Papyrus’, *ZPE* 147 (2004), pp. 1–8, at 2. These scholars already argue that P. Köln belonged to a thematically ordered selection which ‘nach Art einer Anthologie eine eher assoziative Verknüpfung von Tod und Alter zu zeigen scheint und alles in den Rahmen eines ununterbrochenen Singens und Musizierens gestellt hat’, whereas P. Oxy., about 500 years later, provides a representative sample of Sappho’s text coming from an edition divided into books, in which (according to LOBEL’s *ΣΑΠΦΟΥΣ ΜΕΛΗ: The Fragments of the Lyrical Poems of Sappho*, Oxford 1925, p. xv) the poems were arranged in alphabetical order.

⁹ H. BERNSDORFF, ‘Offene Gedichtsschlüsse’, *ZPE* 153 (2005), pp. 1–6.

¹⁰ Also A. LARDINOIS, ‘The new Sappho poem (P.Köln 21351 and 21376). Key to the old fragments’, [in:] E. GREEN & M. SKINNER (eds.), *The new Sappho on Old Age: Textual and Philosophical Issues*, Cambridge, MA – London 2009, pp. 41–57, seems to favour the longer version.

¹¹ M. MAGNANI, ‘Note alla nuova Saffo’, *Eikasmos* 16 (2005), pp. 41–49, at 43.

¹² G. BURZACCHINI, ‘Saffo ffr. 1, 2, 58 V. tra documentazione papiracea e tradizione indiretta’, [in:] G. BASTIANINI & A. CASANOVA (eds.), *I papiri di Saffo e di Alceo. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, Firenze 8–9 giugno 2006*, Florence 2007, pp. 83–114, at 102–104.

¹³ J. LUNDON, ‘Il nuovo testo lirico nel nuovo papiro di Saffo’, [in:] BASTIANINI & CASANOVA (eds.), *I papiri di Saffo e di Alceo* (cit. n. 12), pp. 149–166, at 160 with note 2.

¹⁴ GRONEWALD & DANIEL ‘Sappho-Papyrus’ (cit. n. 8), at 2.

In short, the ‘Tithonus poem’ within its immediate context in the manuscripts prompted an interesting discussion on the arrangement of Sappho’s poems in the earlier and later collections of her poetry. The selection of poems in the Cologne papyrus indicates that the norm of one-author anthology was there replaced by the criterion of thematic congruity,¹⁵ and indeed, as far as the non-Lesbian poem following the ‘Tithonus poem’ is concerned, such motifs as music, old age, immortality or life after death clearly fit the Sapphic context. Discussing more generally the character of selections of that kind, Dee Clayman¹⁶ speaks of the Cologne papyrus as forming ‘clearly a part of an anthology containing poems of a well-known poet from the distant past set together with a new poem apparently composed for the context’.

The discussion on the existence of less stable phases in the transmission of Sappho’s poetry throughout the classical and early Hellenistic periods gave rise to the debate about the possible re-arrangements of Sappho’s compositions for later re-performances (Lidov)¹⁷ or even about the specific contexts of their performing. As far as the Athenian reception of Sappho is concerned, Gregory Nagy¹⁸ and Anton Bierl¹⁹ take into consideration the context of the public events, like Panathenaea, and private occasions, like sympotic competitions of symposiasts at symposia. As yet there is no consensus,²⁰ but that profile of investigations seems to be promising.

¹⁵ S. FERRARINI & R. T. TREVISAN, ‘Per una lettura musicale del «carne ignoto»’, [in:] ALONI (ed.), *Nuove acquisizioni di Saffo e della lirica greca* (cit. n. 5), p. 153.

¹⁶ D. CLAYMAN, ‘The new Sappho in a Hellenistic poetry book’, [in:] GREEN & SKINNER (eds.), *The new Sappho on Old Age* (cit. n. 10), p. 140.

¹⁷ J. LIDOV, ‘Acceptance or assertion? Sappho’s new poem in its books’, [in:] GREEN & SKINNER (eds.), *The new Sappho on Old Age* (cit. n. 10), pp. 84–102, at 100.

¹⁸ G. NAGY, ‘The “new Sappho” reconsidered in the light of the Athenian reception of Sappho’, [in:] GREEN & SKINNER (eds.), *The new Sappho on Old Age* (cit. n. 10), pp. 176–199.

¹⁹ A. BIERL, ‘Der neue Sappho-Papyrus aus Köln und Sapphos Erneuerung: Virtuelle Choralität, Eros, Tod, Orpheus und Musik’, The Center for Hellenic Studies Harvard University Online Publications 2009.

²⁰ M. SKINNER, ‘Introduction’, [in:] GREEN & SKINNER (eds.), *The new Sappho on Old Age* (cit. n. 10), p. 3.

Another recent find of great importance – which paved the way for renewed interest not only in a particular poet, but also in the nature of one of the oldest and most popular poetic genres and its relation to other contemporary poetry – is a fragment from the second-century book of **Archilochus'** elegies, published by Dirk Obbink in 2005 in volume LXIX of *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*.²¹ From this papyrus, only fragment 1 is of substantial length, the remaining seven are small tattered scraps. The attribution of the new poem to Archilochus has been proven already by the first editor and confirmed by other scholars, including West.²²

The newly discovered fragment, with its 28 consecutive, mostly restorable lines, constitutes a major addition to the Archilochean corpus, and specifically to his elegies. Archilochus can now be defined more fully as a poet cultivating different forms of poetry. This fact seems to have prompted Anika Nicolosi²³ to publish separately the preserved elegiac fragments of Archilochus.

As everybody knows, the new Archilochus poem concerns an episode from a pre-Trojan War battle between the Mysians and Achaeans, who – having mistakenly taken Mysia for the Troad – landed in that country and attacked the city of the king Telephus.

The text in Dirk Obbink's translation (as printed in *ZPE* 156 [2005]) reads:²⁴

If there is no need to call it weakness and cowerdise, (to suffer) under the compulsion of a god, then we did well to hasten to flee our dire pains: there exists a proper time for flight. Even once Telephus, descendant of Arkasos, by himself put to flight the great army of Argives, and they fled – indeed, so greatly was the fate of the gods routing them – powerful spear-men though they were. The fair-flowing river Kaïkos and the plain of Mysia were stuffed with the falling corpses, while the well-greaved Achaeans, being slain at the hands of the relentless man (Telephus), turned-off with

²¹ D. OBBINK, 'New literary texts. 4708. Archilochus, *Elegies* (more of VI 854 and XXX 2507)', [in:] N. GONIS, D. OBBINK *et alii* (eds.) *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, vol. LXIX, London 2005, pp. 18–42.

²² M. L. WEST, 'Archilochus and Telephos', *ZPE* 156 (2006), pp. 1–17, at 6.

²³ A. NICOLOSI, *Archiloco. Elegie*, Bologna 2013.

²⁴ D. OBBINK, 'A new Archilochus poem', *ZPE* 156 (2006), pp. 1–9, at 5.

headlong speed to the shore of the much-resounding sea. Gladly did they embark on their swift ships, the sons of the immortals and brothers, whom Agamemnon was leading to holy Ilios to wage war. But on that occasion, because they had lost their way, they had arrived at that shore. They had set upon the lovely city of Teuthras, and there, snorting fury with their horses, alike in their delusion, came in distress of spirit. For they thought they were quickly mounting the high-gated city of Troy, but in vain were they treading on wheat-bearing Mysia. And Heracles came to face (them), as he shouted to his brave-hearted son Telephus, fierce and pitiless in cruel battle, who, inciting unfortunate flight in the Danaans, strove in the front ranks on that occasion to gratify his father.

The preserved fragment starts with a quasi-gnomic statement on acceptability of flight from the battle-field in emergency, especially under divine compulsion. The narrator includes such a remark while speaking of a shameful, apparently contemporary incident, experienced personally by himself. To defend himself and his comrades for having taken to flight in a battle, he introduces as an *exemplum* a mythical parallel which fills the rest of the fragment. However, as Martin West²⁵ rightly noticed, if Archilochus' hearers were as familiar with the story as he was, just three subsequent lines (5–7) might have sufficed to make his point, so the fact that he goes on about it at such length must mean that he enjoys telling the myth for its own sake. One cannot help the impression that although the fragment combines the martial subject matter and a mythological story, the extent to which the latter is treated is certainly significant.

Thus, we are dealing here, for the first time, with a mythical narrative in elegiac verses. Such a kind of composition as a specific sub-genre has no parallels not only in Archilochus, but even generally in the archaic Greek elegy.²⁶ Structurally, the poem may have been more traditional, that is tripartite, with the *exemplum* preceded and followed by references to the present situation of the speaker. This is now the majority view, but Ewen Bowie²⁷ believes that the poem features a self-standing mythological narrative unrelated to any account of his own actions by the poet.

²⁵ WEST, 'Archilochus and Telephos' (cit. n. 22), p. 15.

²⁶ C. NOBILI, 'Tra epos ed elegia: il nuovo Archiloco', *Maia* 61 (2009), pp. 229–249.

²⁷ E. BOWIE, 'Historical narrative in archaic and early classical Greek elegy', [in:]

It is worthy of note that the ‘new Archilochus’ allows us to observe more similarities between his iambic and elegiac production as it was possible before its publication. As far as the topics are concerned, the elements common to both genres are war, maxims, personal matters.²⁸ In respect of events described, the new poem, basically, comes close to iambus in presenting a situation which Obbink defined as a ‘comedy of errors and worst-case-scenario of warfare’.²⁹ Archilochus the elegist retains some of his typical scoptic or at least seriocomic tone.

Laura Swift in her recent article³⁰ showed convincingly that the new poem is of critical importance also to the question of Archilochus’ relationship to Homer. The scholar emphasises that it contributes to a broader picture of the poet’s *œuvre* and argues that the traditional reading of Archilochus either as a straightforward subverter or affirmer of epic values is an oversimplification both of Archilochus’ poetry and of Homer’s. Archilochus’ attitude to flight is similar to the epic paradigm according to which flight, although never unproblematic, is not regarded automatically as unappropriate, especially when the gods are against somebody. On the other side, Archilochus also points out the discontinuity between the glorious world of Homer and the world he describes, and the choice of the story of a mistaken conflict has an ironic overtone when referred to the degraded present, where aspirations to behave like true epic heroes are inevitably bound to fail.

The importance of the third of the recent finds, the Milan **Posidippus** papyrus (*P. Mil. Vogl.* VIII 309), an extensive anthology of epigrams published in 2001 by Guido Bastianini and Claudio Gallazzi in collaboration with Colin Austin,³¹ is difficult to overestimate. It brings to a new

D. KONSTAN & K. A. RAAFLAUB (eds.), *Epic and History*, Malden, MA – Oxford – Chichester 2010, pp. 145–166, at 151; the scholar supplements in line 4 a first person plural verb such as ‘we know’ (ἐπιστάμεθ’) or ‘we have received a tradition’ (ἐδέξαμεθ’).

²⁸ NICOLOSI, *Archiloco. Elegie* (cit. n. 23), p. 14.

²⁹ OBBINK, ‘A new Archilochus poem’ (cit. n. 24), pp. 8–9.

³⁰ L. SWIFT, ‘Archilochus the ‘anti-hero’? Heroism, flight and values in Homer and the new Archilochus fragment (*P. Oxy.* LXIX 4708)’, *JHS* 132 (2012), pp. 139–155.

³¹ G. BASTIANINI & C. GALLAZZI with C. AUSTIN (eds.), *Posidippo di Pella: Epigrammi* (*P. Mil. Vogl.* VIII 309), Milan 2001.

stage our knowledge of Posidippus' poetic *œuvre* and, more generally, extends the panorama of the known sub-categories of the epigrammatic genre, as well as our understanding of the process of compiling single-authored collections and their relation to the other, Hellenistic and later, anthologies. Given the worldwide interest in Posidippus, a new edition of his entire literary production, which would include also the twenty-odd poems previously known, was more than needed. To meet such expectations, two of the *editores principes*, Colin Austin and Guido Bastianini, prepared an *editio minor* entitled *Posidippi Pellaei quae supersunt omnia* (Milan, 2002). The numbers of epigrams mentioned in my paper will refer to this very edition.

As usual in the case of new finds, the initial discussion concerned, among other things, the epigrams' authenticity. Since John Tzetzes attributes one of the epigrams (15) to Posidippus, and another one (65) is included under Posidippus' name in the *Planudean Anthology*, it was tempting to infer that Posidippus of Pella in Macedonia, a famous poet of the third century BC, is the author of the whole collection. The papyrus itself gives no direct indications of authorship, but studies in language, meter and structure of the collection point to its considerable consistency, so now most scholars, following the verdict of the first editors, are inclined to attribute all poems to the the Macedonian epigrammatist – in spite of the opposite views of Hugh Lloyd-Jones,³² Luigi Bravi³³ or, above all, Stefan Schröder.³⁴

A specific feature of the Milan papyrus lies in grouping epigrams into nine categories or sections, each with its own subject heading: *lithika*

³² H. LLOYD-JONES, 'All by Posidippus?', [in:] D. ACCORINTI & P. CHUVIN (eds.), *Des géants à Dionysos. Mélanges de mythologie et de poésie grecque offerts à Francis Vian*, Alessandria 2003, pp. 277–280.

³³ L. BRAVI, 'Gli epigrammi di Simonide e il P. Mil. Vogl. VIII 309', [in:] M. DI MARCO, B. M. PALUMBO & E. LELLI (eds.), *Posidippo e gli altri. Il poeta, il genere, il contesto culturale e letterario*, Pisa – Rome 2005, pp. 1–7.

³⁴ S. SCHRÖDER, 'Skeptische Überlegungen zum Mailänder Epigrammpapyrus (P. Mil. Vogl. VIII 309)', *ZPE* 148 (2004), pp. 29–73. The objections of this scholar have been refuted by E. LIVREA, 'Il fantasma del non-Posidippo', [in:] G. LOZZA & S. MARTINELLI TEMPESTA (eds.), *L'epigramma greco. Problemi e prospettive*, Milan 2009, pp. 69–95.

(about stones, 1–20), *oionoskopika* (about omens, 21–35), *anathematika* (dedications, 36–41), *epitymbia* (on tombs, 42–61), *andriantopoiika* (on statues, literally: statue-making, 62–70), *hippika* (on equestrian victories, 71–88), *nauagika* (on men who died at sea, 89–94), *iamatika* (on cures, 95–101), *tropoi* (literally: ‘turnings’, words spoken by deceased persons to those who pass by their tombs, 102–109). A tenth section may lurk in the tattered remains of the end of the roll.

Some of these categories are familiar, such as poems on tombs (*epitymbia*) or dedications (*anathematika*); other sections are more exotic, e.g. poems about stones (*lithika*), omens (*oionoskopika*), statue-making (*andriantopoiika*), even a group of funerary epigrams with the enigmatic title ‘turnings’ or ‘characters’ (*tropoi*). And these last dominate the preserved part of the collection. Addressing this problem, Kathryn Gutzwiller states:³⁵ ‘Nothing in the literary or papyrological record had prepared scholars for the topics of the other sections on the papyrus’. The scholar notes that connections between these categories and various aspects of Hellenistic poetry gradually are revealed, but is forced to conclude that ‘the papyrus [...] brings awareness of how little is actually known about the scope of epigrammatic production and collection in the early Hellenistic age’. Trying to explain the more unusual headings in Posidippus papyrus, Nita Krevans³⁶ draws attention to their utilitarian character and compares the content of such sections to those of prose treatises.

What is striking, is the absence of erotic or sympotic epigrams, very characteristic of the previously known part of Posidippus’ production, written in the vein of the poet’s contemporary Asclepiades. Of course, poems of that nature could form one of the further sections of the papyrus. Nevertheless, in the light of the new papyrus, the extent of his allegiance to Asclepiades has been considerably challenged. More gener-

³⁵ K. GUTZWILLER, ‘Introduction’, [in:] K. GUTZWILLER (ed.), *The New Posidippus: A Hellenistic Poetry Book*, Oxford 2005, p. 5.

³⁶ N. KREVANS, ‘The editor’s toolbox: strategies for selection and presentation in the Milan epigram papyrus’, [in:] GUTZWILLER (ed.), *New Posidippus* (cit. n. 35), pp. 81–96, at 88.

ally, as Dirk Obbink rightly observes,³⁷ the Milan roll makes us reconsider the processes of selection and canonisation to which classical and Hellenistic poetry was subject in later antiquity. In the case of *erotica*, their prominence in the *Palatine Anthology* can be, at least partly, explained by the particular interests of Meleager when he came to make his selection.³⁸ But what about the other types of epigrams collected in the Milan papyrus and the principles of their organisation?

This leads us to the much discussed question of the concept of the Milan papyrus as a book. Is this really *A Hellenistic Poetry Book*, as suggested by the second part of the title of the most important publication edited and co-authored by Kathryn Gutzwiller,³⁹ or rather, as argued by Dirk Obbink,⁴⁰ a collection of ‘subliterary compositions’, a poetry book *in statu nascendi*, allowing us to see that poetry at an intermediate stage between the composition of individual poems and their gathering into collections by readers and editors? The latter hypothesis is attractive given the fact that Posidippus and his contemporaries were still writing in that transitional phase when epigrams were detaching themselves from the objects (statues, gravestones, dedications, etc. – the whole area covered by Posidippus) and becoming an autonomous genre,⁴¹ which allowed for the possible occasionality of some epigrams.

On the other side, already the first editors recognise that the arrangement of the poems was not just formal or convenient, but refined, aesthetically designed to appeal to a reading public. Their opinion has been supported by numerous contributions of other scholars who point out a purposeful organisation not only on the level of whole collection, but also within the sections, indicating intentionally paired and ordered successive epigrams, subtle transitions to the next subsections, etc.

³⁷ D. OBBINK, ‘New old Posidippus and old new Posidippus: from occasion to edition in the epigrams’, [in:] GUTZWILLER (ed.), *New Posidippus* (cit. n. 35), pp. 97–115, at 98.

³⁸ See A. H. GRIFFITH, ‘Posidippus, poet on a roll’, *JHS* 126 (2006), pp. 141–144, at 142.

³⁹ GUTZWILLER (ed.), *The New Posidippus* (cit. n. 35).

⁴⁰ OBBINK, ‘New old Posidippus’ (cit. n. 37), p. 115.

⁴¹ As GRIFFITH (cit. n. 38), p. 142, reminds us.

Yet, this majority opinion cannot be accepted as absolutely decisive for one important reason: it is originally based on the subjective conviction of the interpreters that in each case there must be a thematic connection⁴² and the arrangement cannot be but an artistic one. The same uncertainty holds true for the question of the authorial versus non-authorial design of the the book.

The considerations presented above may be concluded in different ways. Let my conclusion be the following: Although the 'New Texts' from early Greek lyric poetry and Hellenistic epigram – to generalise a specific remark by Dirk Obbink⁴³ – may be said to have raised more problems than they have solved, their importance, as I tried to show in my paper, lies also in the former sphere. With every new find we are faced with new aspects of what had been seemingly established, and forced to ask new questions. This stimulating function of the new discoveries is almost as rewarding as the accretion of texts they provide.

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⁴² The point raised by Jacqueline J. H. KLOOSTER in her review of GUTZWILLER *The New Posidippus* (*Mnemosyne* 60 [2007], pp. 297–301, at 300).

⁴³ OBBINK, 'New old Posidippus' (cit. n. 37), p. 98.