

# ON FIRST LOOKING INTO THE NEW POSIDIPPUS (*Ep.* 64, 74 and 87 Austin-Bastianini)

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It is a pleasure to contribute an article to a volume in honour of André Hurst. Knowing his love for Greek poetry of all periods, and the attention he has given to new texts, it seemed appropriate to turn my own attention to the new papyrus of Posidippus (*P. Mil. Vogl.* VIII 309), which presents not only fascinating textual and dialectal problems but also a series of witty epigrams on a wide range of topics. In the few years since this heavily corrupt papyrus became known, so much has been written that one might have expected that there would be nothing left to add. But my ear was tickled by three epigrams that have continued to puzzle scholars; they can become my triple libation for this occasion. I have translated the first in the facetious manner for which its tone seemed to call. I can at least be confident that our polyglot honorand will get the joke, despite the linguistic licenses and outrageous rhyme-schemes that the form of the limerick requires.

## I

64.1 αἴ]γρέ γ' Ἰδομενῆα θέλων χάλκειον ἐκείν[ον.  
Κρησίλα· ὡς ἄκρωσ ἠργάσατ' εἶδομες εὔ·  
γ]αρύ[ει] Ἰδομενεύς· “ἀλ[λ]’ ὦ ἴγαθὲ Μηριόνα, θεῖ  
πὰρ ζωιο]πλάσται δὰν [ἀδό]νητος ἑών”

*Praise warmly that bronze Idoméneus  
that Cresilas wrought – what a genius!*

*Idómeneus says:*

*‘Run, Meriones,*

*’cos the sculptor’s long sittings were tedious!’*

Col. X 26-9 edd. = Bastianini et Galazzi; Lapini<sup>1</sup> = Lapini 2002; Lapini<sup>2</sup> = Lapini 2003 1 γειδομενεια pap. 2 Κρησίλα· ὡς edd.: κρησιλεως pap.: Κρησίλε<ω>· ὡς Lapini<sup>1</sup> ἄκρω<ς>σ’ Lapini<sup>2</sup> εἶδομες scripsi: εἶδομεν pap. 4 πὰρ ζωιο]πλάσται scripsi: ἀλγέω δὲ] πλάσται dubitanter edd.: νωθείαι] πλαστᾶι Austin ap. edd.: καίπερ ὑπὸ] πλάσται Angiò: . . . . πέ]πλασται Lapini<sup>2</sup> ἀδό]νητος edd.: ἀπό]νητος Angiò: ἀνό]νητος Lapini<sup>1</sup>

The major problem in understanding this poem has always been the lacuna at the start of line 4, which was correctly calculated by the first editors as being seven letters wide. Without it, the exact point of the poem is very hard to discern, although it must lie somewhere in the extraordinary realism of this sculpture by the Cretan artist Cresilas, depicting a pair of Cretan heroes like the “Riace warriors”; this is a common *topos* in Posidippus<sup>1</sup>.

The first suggestion to be offered was in the *editio princeps*<sup>2</sup>: this was ἀλγέω δὲ ] πλάσται. “I’m annoyed at the sculptor”, says Idomeneus, asking his companion to run to free him from his own static position. There is an unwelcome synizesis in the Ionic form ἀλγέω, which is itself out of place in this heavily Doric poem. The sense, too, is stilted.

Another solution offered there was Austin’s νωθείαι ] πλαστᾶι, which yields a very different sense, “as you were long motionless in false idleness”. Idomeneus is accusing Meriones of standing still like a statue. This involves reaccenting πλαστᾶι as the adjective, and a rather odd usage of the latter. Posidippus is fond of the noun πλάστης “sculptor”: this occurs at 65.1 and 142.1 A.-B. If he did write νωθείαι ] πλαστᾶι, this would easily be misread as πλάσται in the context of a poem on sculpture, which would be confusing. Another obvious suggestion is πέ ] πλαστᾶι<sup>3</sup>.

The adjective in the second half of the line has also been variously supplied. Lapini suggested ἀνό]νητος “useless”<sup>4</sup>, and Angiò ἀπό]νητος, i.e. “esente dalle fatiche della guerra”<sup>5</sup>. Either would allude to the famous scene in Homer’s *Iliad* 13.240-294, in which Idomeneus and Meriones find each other behind the lines and have an uneasy conversation in which each defends his valour<sup>6</sup>. But the first editors’ suggestion ἀδό]νητος “unshaken, unmoved, without stirring” is used by Paul the Silentiary (*AP.5.267*), and gives an appropriate contrast to the swift motion that Idomeneus now asks of Meriones, a noted runner<sup>7</sup>.

The path towards a correct solution was opened by Angiò, who suggested καίπερ ὑπὸ ] πλάσται, “sebbene per opera dello scultore, tu sia da lungo tempo immobile”<sup>8</sup>. However, at nine letters, even with two narrow ones (iota and rho), this supplement is much too wide. Before seeing her

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Ep.* 63 and 65 A.-B, with Kosmetatou 2004a, 191, 197-199. Could the Riace bronzes be this very work?

<sup>2</sup> Bastianini/Galazzi 2001, 191-192.

<sup>3</sup> Lapini 2003, 50.

<sup>4</sup> Lapini 2002, 57.

<sup>5</sup> Angiò 2002, 139.

<sup>6</sup> Kosmetatou 2004a, 197-199.

<sup>7</sup> See my notes on *Iliad* 13.249-250, 16.342-344 (Janko 1992, 79, 361).

<sup>8</sup> Angiò 2002, 139.

proposal, I had thought of πὰρ ζωιο]πλάσται, which is seven letters wide. Posidippus uses this term at *Ep.* 62.1-2 A.-B. (col. X 8-10):

μυ[ή]σασθε τὰδ' ἔργα, πολυχρονίους δὲ κολοσσῶν,  
ὦ ζ[ωι]οπλάσται, ν[αί], παραβέλτε νόμους.

ζωιοπλάσται is used in the same metrical position as here, and according to the published images of the papyrus takes up exactly the amount of space that is available for it. The word is rare but attested (it is also in Lycophron, Philo and Eustathius). Its sense exactly fits the context: it means “sculptor from life”. If this is correct, the conceit of the poem is that Cresilas’ statue is so lifelike that it was copied from the physical person of the hero himself, who had to sit motionless for a long time so that the sculptor could copy every detail of his physiognomy.

The dialect of the poem also presents difficulties. There is still, in my view, no edition of Posidippus (not even the *editio minor* of Austin and Bastianini) that gets his use of dialect right. In each epigram where he uses some Doric forms, the remaining ones should be restored throughout, since in *Ep.* 65 A.-B. (col. X 30-3, = *AP XVI* (Plan.) 119) the Milan papyrus proved that Denys Page’s systematic restoration of Doric forms was correct. Otherwise the poet composes in good Ionic. The scribe of the papyrus, however, is bad at both dialects and tends to substitute forms from the κοινή<sup>9</sup>. It is risky to posit subtle poetic explanations for anomalous dialectal forms when they are likely to be owed to this unreliable copyist. Hence I restore εἶδομες εὔ in line 2, rather than accept εἶδομεν εὔ as a play on the name of Idomeneus (in its later spelling Εἰδομενεύς), as the first editors suggested<sup>10</sup>. This makes the dialect of the epigram

<sup>9</sup> Sens’ (2004) thorough and dialectally well informed treatment of this question underestimates, in my view, the copyist’s unreliability, as do the numerous defenders of blatant mixtures of dialectal forms in Posidippus. As the papyri indicate, most of the κοινή forms in the Medieval manuscripts of poets like Theocritus are likely to have entered the transmission very early. Our scribe also tends to make errors in contrasting pairs, as if trying to correct his first mistake by making a second one (for this “law of the second error” see Janko 2000, 81-82). Thus in the Ionic epigram *Ep.* 39.2 A.-B. (col. VI 31) he mistakenly uses the Attic dative Εὐπλοία instead of Εὐπλοίῃ and in the next line puts νηοῦ instead of the correct epic form ναοῦ, which is preserved at *Ep.* 31.3 A.-B. (col. V 24). Likewise at *Ep.* 14.5 A.-B. (col. II 37) he omits the ν in ἀ<ν>ημιόχητον because he had inserted an extra ν in Ἀλή{ν}ιον two lines above (the word ἀημιόχητος breaks the laws of word-formation, since ἡνία never began with a digamma, as is shown by Linear B).

<sup>10</sup> Bastianini/Galazzi 2001, 190. The ending -μες is attested in other Doric poems of Posidippus, e.g. ἀγάγομ[ε]ς at *Ep.* 87.2 A.-B. (col. XIII 32), and the scribe’s correction of εἶλομες to εἶλομεν at *Ep.* 75.1 A.-B. (col. XII 8) is best understood as the introduction of the κοινή form, as the editors realised.

consistent: in Cretan dialect ἠργάσατ(ο) would be correct for εἰργάσατο, contracted from ἐϜεργάσατο (Cretan retained initial digamma until the second century B.C. but lost it earlier in intervocalic position<sup>11</sup>), ἐών is the Cretan form of the participle of εἶμι *sum* and πάρ is correct for παρά<sup>12</sup>. Conversely, ἀδό]γατος would be a hyperdoric form, since the verb is δονέω<sup>13</sup>.

## II

- 74.1 ἐν Δελφοῖς ἢ πῶλος ὄτ' ἀντιθέουσα τεθρίπποις  
 ἄξονι Θεσσαλικῶι κοῦφα συνεξέπεσε  
 νεύματι νικήσασα, πολὺς τότε θροῦς ἐλατήρων  
 ἦν ἀμφικτύοσιν, Φοῖβ', ἐν ἀγωνοθέταις.  
 74.5 ῥάβδους δὲ βραβέες χαμάδις βάλον, ὥς διὰ κλήρου  
 νίκης ἠνιόχων οἰσομένων στέφανον . . .

*At Delphi once the filly raced her Thessalian car  
 among quadrigas, and dextrously emerged  
 the winner by a nose. Great was then the din  
 the drivers made, Apollo, amid the Pythian judges.  
 The umpires cast their staffs upon the ground,  
 so the drivers would win the victor's crown by lot . . .*

Col. XI 33-8 2 ἄξονι edd.: ἀξονα pap. 4 φοιβεεν pap. 5 βραβέες  
 scripsi: βραχεες pap.: βραχέως ci. Austin ap. edd.

In line 5 of this miniature epinician in six distichs in honour of the victory of Callicrates of Samos, the admiral of Ptolemy II, the scribe wrote ῥάβδους δὲ βραχέες χαμάδις βάλον, where βραχέες seems awkward and odd. The first editors suggest that it is a predicative complement of an understood subject ἀγωνοθέται derivable from the verse above, unless it should be corrected to βραχεώς, as Austin proposed<sup>14</sup>; in the *editio minor* the latter translates “in no time they threw their rods to the ground”. Another possible correction might be βραχέας, which is implied by the translation “their short staffs”<sup>15</sup>. But it matters little how rapidly

<sup>11</sup> Buck 1955, 46-49. The editors well compared ἠάσατ(ο) for εἰάσατο in the Doric epigram *Ep.* 102.1 A.-B. (col. XV 24), which has several other Cretan vocalisms. Why they then tolerate σῆμα and ἐπὶ ξενίης in lines 3-4 escapes me; read σᾶμα and ἐπὶ ξενίας.

<sup>12</sup> Buck 1955, 129, 169.

<sup>13</sup> Sens 2004, 70. Thus one need not ask the poet did not write ἀδό]γατος (Bastianini/Galazzi 2001, 191).

<sup>14</sup> Bastianini/Galazzi 2001, 201.

<sup>15</sup> Kosmetatou 2004b, 230 (but she prints βραχέες).

they cast down their staffs, or how long those staffs were; what is important is *who* cast them down. We need a clearer signal of the change of subject to the umpires, who are mentioned in an oblique case in the couplet above (ἀγωνιοθέταις), since the drivers appear there too, again in an oblique case (ἐλατήρων); otherwise there is a potential ambiguity as to which group is meant. I suggest that the scribe has written βραχέες by mistake for the less familiar Ionic form βραβέες, plural of βραβεύς. This is the *mot juste* for an umpire at Delphi, as Sophocles' narrative of Orestes' chariot-race there makes clear (*El.*690). Again we must note how corrupt the papyrus can be, despite its temporal proximity to the author.

## III

87.1 π[ῶλοι] ἔθ' ἀμῆς ἐοῦσαι Ὀλυμ[πια]κὸν Βερενίκας,  
 Π[ι]σᾶ[τ]αι, Μακέτας ἀγάγομ[ε]ς στέφανον,  
 ὅς τὸ [πο]λυθρύλητον ἔχει κλέος, ὧ τὸ Κυνίσκας  
 ἐν Σπάρ[τ]αι χρόνιον κῦδος ἀφειλόμεθα.

*While yet we were fillies we won the Olympic crown  
 of Berenice of Macedon, you men of Pisa.  
 That crown has far-famed glory, since we snatched  
 from Cynisca in Sparta her long-standing record.*

Col. XIII 31-4 1 π[ῶλοι] scripsi: ἴπ[ποι] edd., qui ἀ[γναὶ] suppleverant  
 2 Π[ι]σᾶ[τ]αι edd., qui παιδίσ[κ]αι suppleverant 3 πο]λυθρύλητον  
 pap.<sup>ac</sup>: πο]λυθρύλατον pap.<sup>pc</sup>

In line 1 the editors offered their original suggestion ἀ[γναὶ] because they thought the speakers of this poem were a chorus of maidens, since they also read παιδίσ[κ]αι in line 2<sup>16</sup>. Once Cameron had perceived that the speakers are horses depicted in a group statue<sup>17</sup>, the editors supplied ἴπ[ποι] instead.

At first reading, the phrase ἴπ[ποι] ἔθ' ἀμῆς ἐοῦσαι mystified me; what on earth could be meant by “when we were still [mares]”<sup>18</sup>? What else could they have become? Not stallions, evidently. The first editors' explanation<sup>19</sup> turned out to be that the mares who won this famous<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Bastianini/Galazzi 1993, epigram XXIV, taken up by Cameron 1995, 243-244.

<sup>17</sup> 1995, 244. For this device cf. *Ep.* 75 A.-B. (col. XII 8-11). The ultimate inspiration is of course Achilles' talking horse in *Il.*19.404-418.

<sup>18</sup> So Austin's translation in Austin/Bastianini 2002, 113.

<sup>19</sup> Bastianini/Galazzi 2001, 215.

<sup>20</sup> As Sens noted (2004, 70), editors are wrong to print the scribe's correction πολυθρύλατον; this too is a hyperdoric form (cf. the verb θρυλέω).

Olympic victory, now turned into highly realistic bronzes, were referring to their previous living state, just as Idomeneus and Meriones in *Ep.* 64 A.-B. are imagined as having been transformed from living heroes into bronze statues. They have outdone the bronze horses dedicated at Olympia by Agesilaus' sister Cynisca<sup>21</sup>. However, this explanation seems laboured.

A better solution arises from the editors' original idea that the speakers of the poem about Berenice were girls. In developing this Cameron wrote:

“since it is these ‘girls’ who win the crown and take long-standing glory from Cynisca, they must be Berenice’s victorious horses. The emphasis on their youth, gender and marital status is merely a poetic way of indicating that she won in the category of πῶλοι with an all female team.”

He notes that Miltiades won three successive Olympic victories with the same set of mares<sup>22</sup>, and that coursers are often mares in Pindar<sup>23</sup>. After 384 B.C., when the πωλικὸν τέθριππον was established at Olympia<sup>24</sup>, there were separate chariot-races for horses and for foals, as is exemplified by the double victory won by the umpire Troilus in 372 B.C.<sup>25</sup> The contest for foals was too early for Cynisca, who won her victories in (probably) 396 and 392. But her feat was outdone by the triple Nemean victory of Berenice II, which she won with the chariot of horses, the chariot of foals and the συνωρίς; this is celebrated by Posidippus in *Ep.* 79 A.-B. (col. XII 34-9), as is the multiple Olympic victory of Arsinöe II in *Ep.* 78.7-8 (col. XII 26-7). Since Bilistiche won Olympic chariot victories with fillies in 268 and 264, Cameron deduced that the Berenice of this poem is Berenice I (ca. 317-277) and not Berenice II<sup>26</sup>. The fact that the epigram is placed between poems in honour of Berenice I may support his identification<sup>27</sup>. *Ep.* 78.5 (col. XII 24) and 88 (col. XIII 35-XIV 1) both refer to a chariot victory of Berenice I at Olympia, but these poems offer no further details.

We now know that there are no girls in this epigram, but loquacious mares. The simplest explanation of the opening phrase is that these mares were “still fillies” (π[ῶλοι] ἔθ') when they won the race. The traces of ink

<sup>21</sup> Paus.5.12.5.

<sup>22</sup> Hdt.6.103.

<sup>23</sup> *O.* 1.41, 6.14, *N.* 9.52, *P.* 4.17, etc.

<sup>24</sup> Paus.5.8.10.

<sup>25</sup> Paus. 6.1.4, ἀνελέσθαι νίκας . . . τελείαι τε συνωρίδι καὶ πῶλων ἄρματι.

<sup>26</sup> Cameron 244, followed by Bastianini/Galazzi 2001, 214-215. Bingen is inclined to agree (2002, 51 n. 10, 57 n. 23).

<sup>27</sup> Bastianini/Galazzi 2001, 214.

surviving at the start of the line are just as compatible with  $\pi[$  as with  $\iota\pi[$ .<sup>28</sup> In this hand  $\pi[\omega\lambda\omicron\iota$  should occupy slightly more space than would  $\iota\pi[\rho\omicron\iota$ , but this presents no difficulty at the start of this verse. Posidippus uses the feminine  $\eta\ \pi\omega\lambda\omicron\varsigma$  at *Ep.* 74.1 A.-B., cited above. Thus this epigram does indeed celebrate a victory with a chariot of fillies, as Cameron surmised, but it says so explicitly<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> “Due tracce puntiformi sovrapposte nella parte più alta del rigo. Dopo mm. 0,8, tratto orizzontale di mm. 2, che è collocato sul rigo superiore e che ha immediatamente al di sotto un punto spostato verso la sua estremità destra” (Bastianini/Galazzi 2001, 97).

<sup>29</sup> I am most grateful to my colleague Benjamin Acosta-Hughes for useful discussions of these epigrams, and have also benefitted from the on-line version of Posidippus in progress by him and Elizabeth Kosmetatou at [http://www.chs.harvard.edu/classic-sat/issue\\_1/](http://www.chs.harvard.edu/classic-sat/issue_1/).

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