

Athenaeus and Hellenistic Epigram

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Abstract I explore the distribution of Athenaeus' citations of Hellenistic epigrams, in what sort of texts he found them, and whether he knew Meleager's *Garland*. Listing poems cited, I note as absent Asclepiades, Dioscorides, Leonidas, and Meleager. I suggest Athenaeus knew either single-author books or a collection of all or many of some poets' epigrams. Reviewing hypotheses about such a collection (probably of Poseidippus, Asclepiades and Hedylus), I propose that Athenaeus spotted Hedylus on encountering the three-author collection, then turned to single-author editions of two of these poets, Poseidippus and Hedylus, citing poems either that Meleager chanced not to select or that he knew not to be in his *Garland*.

Keywords Asclepiades. Athenaeus. Book. Callimachus. Collection. Epigram. *Garland*. Hedylus. Hellenistic. Poseidippus.

How should we explain the surprising distribution of Athenaeus' rather few quotations of Hellenistic epigrams? This is the corollary of a different but related question: in what sort of texts did Athenaeus find these epigrams, and did Athenaeus know the *Garland of Meleager*?

First, some facts. Athenaeus has 22 identifiable citations of Hellenistic epigrams. In order of frequency these are:

Eight of Hedylus

Five of Callimachus

Four of Poseidippus

Two of Nicaenetus

One each of Mnasalces, Phalaecus and Rhianus.



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Most striking here is the preponderance of epigrams by Hedylus. Indeed at present we only know 12 poems of Hedylus totalling 67 lines (Gow-Page, *HE* 1825-1892), and of these 67 lines we know 49 from Athenaeus. Only four poems by Hedylus are found in the Palatine or Planudean anthologies, 18 lines in all: two witty and elegant six-line ἀναθηματικά, both also known to the Suda, presumably from Cephalas' anthology,¹ *HE* 1825-36 = *Anth. Pal.* 6.292 and 5.199; a four-line miniature *epinicion* for a wrestler (*HE* 1887-90 = *Anth. Pal.* 11.123); and a two-line sympotic squib claiming λυσιμελής gout as the child of λυσιμελής Bacchus and λυσιμελής Aphrodite (*HE* 1891-1892 = *Anth. Pal.* 11.414). None of the four anthology poems is known to Athenaeus, none of the eight poems cited by him appears in the anthologies.

The situation of Posidippus is not dissimilar. All four poems cited by Athenaeus are absent from the anthology: two eight-liners, a sepulchral epigram on the glutton Phromachus (121 AB, *HE* 3134-3141) and another on the *hetaira* Doricha who ensnared Sappho's brother Charaxus (122 AB, *HE* 3142-3149); a six-liner on the temple dedicated to Aphrodite Zephyritis by the Ptolemaic admiral Callicrates (119 AB, *HE* 3120-3125); and a four-liner on a statue of the Thasian glutton Theagenes (120 AB, *HE* 3126-3129). These four poems furnished only 26 of the 146 lines we knew before publication of the Milan Poseidippus papyrus, and of the remaining 120 we knew 96 from the anthologies (and 24 from other papyri). Athenaeus also mentions, but does not quote, an epigram of Posidippus on a woman called Aglaia who played the trumpet in the first great procession at Alexandria (143 AB = *Suppl. Hell.* 702); quotes a hexameter from his poem *Asopia* (145 AB = *Suppl. Hell.* 698); and claims that Doricha was often mentioned by Posidippus in his *Aethiopia* (146 AB = *Suppl. Hell.* 699).

I now turn to Athenaeus' five citations of Callimachus. His only poem quoted in full is an elaborate twelve-liner spoken by a shell (κόγχος) dedicated to Aphrodite Zephyritis by Arsinoe (*HE* 1109-1120): it too did not find its way into the anthologies. But there are also two quotations of a five-word phrase in different forms (*HE* 1337-1338), both in book 7.² There are also two citations which do overlap with our anthologised Callimachus: Athenaeus 15.669d quotes 'the Cyrenaean' for *HE* 1105-1106, lines 3-4 of Callimachus, Epigram 43 Pfeiffer (a poem we know complete from *Anth. Pal.* 12.134); and 10.436e quotes Callim. *Epigr.* 36 Pfeiffer (*HE* 1325-1326 = *Anth. Pal.* 7.454), but without naming the author.

The total of Hellenistic epigrams cited by Athenaeus is completed by a four-liner of Mnasalces satirising hedonistic philosophy cit-

¹ Cf. Cameron 1993, 277-82.

² ἱερὸς δέ τοι, ἱερὸς ὕκης at 7.284c; θεὸς δέ οἱ, ἱερὸς ὕκης at 7.327a.

ed at 4.163a, also quoted by Eustathius (*HE* 2667-2670); a four-line dedication of party garb to Dionysus by Phalaecus cited at 10.440d (*HE* 2935-2938); an eight-line intimation by Nicaenetus of a party in a shrine of Hera cited at 15.673b (*HE* 2703-2710); and six lines by Nicaenetus on Cratinus cited at 2 (epit.).39c (*HE* 2711-2716). This last poem also reached the Anthologies (*Anth. Pal.* 13.29) and its first two lines are found in the paroemiographer Zenobius (6.22). But the remaining 16 lines of these poets do not appear in the anthologies.

We should also take account of the dogs that did not bark in the night: Athenaeus has nothing from Asclepiades, nothing from Dioscorides, nothing from Leonidas – indeed nothing from Meleager himself – all poets whose oeuvre known to us furnishes many details that might well have caught Athenaeus' deipnosophistic eye.

The obvious, and perhaps the correct, explanation is that Athenaeus knew the poems that he did cite not from anthologies but from single-author editions. That is supported by his predominant mode of citation, ἐν (τοῖς) ἐπιγράμμασιν. That phrase is used by Athenaeus when citing the five-word phrase of Callimachus, and when citing Mnasalces, Phalaecus, and Nicaenetus (whom Athenaeus classes as ὁ ἐποποιός); it is also how he cites Hedylus, except on three occasions where a citation follows immediately upon one already attributed to (τὰ) ἐπιγράμματα, and how in most cases he cites Posidippus, though in citing 119 AB and 122 AB he does not, since in each case he refers to the poem as τόδε τὸ ἐπίγραμμα. To me this mode of citation suggests that he knew either single-author volumes of each of these epigrammatists, or possibly a collection in which all or many epigrams of a small number of authors were assembled and were arranged by author. The former seems to me somewhat more probable given the absence from Athenaeus of some major figures – would not a collection of epigrams by Hedylus, Poseidippus and Callimachus also have included poems by Asclepiades and others?

Although such a collection seems to me the less probable explanation, one factor requires it at least to be considered, and that is the very attractive hypothesis that there was an early collection of Hellenistic epigrams precisely of Poseidippus, Asclepiades and Hedylus. It had already been noted by Sternbach that in several sequences in the *Palatine Anthology* poems of Poseidippus and Asclepiades are found adjacent to each other (5.185-186, 202-203, 209-210; 12.46-47; cf. *Anth. Plan.* 119-120),³ and there are several others where alternative attributions to one or other of these poets are offered.⁴ In 1893 Reitzenstein⁵ noted that there were also places where poems of Poseidippus and Asclepiades

³ Sternbach 1890.

⁴ Cf. Gow, Page 1965, 2: 117.

⁵ Reitzenstein 1893, 101 ff.

were separated by one of Meleager (5.181-187, 207-213; 12.75-89, 161-168). From these phenomena, and from the way that Meleager links Poseidippus, Asclepiades and Hedylus closely in his poem introducing his *Garland*,⁶ Reitzenstein concluded that there was an early edition of these three epigrammatists in which poems were not attributed to author. He also wanted to identify this edition with the collection that is called *Σωρός* in a scholion on *Il.* 11.101:⁷ that collection was one in which Aristarchus found a poem of Poseidippus called *Berisos* that he had not been able to find *ἐν τοῖς Ποσειδίππου ἐπιγράμμασιν*.⁸ For Reitzenstein, then, there was a collection called *Σωρός* which assembled poems by all three epigrammatists. Evidence published later supported the hypothesis of such a collection: *P.Tebtunis* 3, of the first century BC, probably part of Meleager's *Garland*, in which it seems that a poem of Posidippus (117 AB) and one of Asclepiades (*HE* 1030-1034) were adjacent.

Although accepted and elaborated by some scholars,⁹ however, the hypothesis cannot survive the objections brought against it by Gow and Cameron.¹⁰ Cameron himself proposed a variation: Hedylus, the latest of the three poets, 'published a collection of the work of Asclepiades and Posidippus, the two other most distinguished epigrammatists of the age, adding for good measure a selection of his own work in the same vein'.¹¹ For Cameron this was a collection in which 'all epigrams would have been ascribed to their respective authors', but in the process of copying some such ascriptions disappeared: consequently double ascriptions in Meleager's anthology were the result of his collating either two copies of this collection (one with ascriptions preserved complete and one in which some had disappeared) or a copy of this collection with complete editions of the epigrams of the individual poets. Cameron was agnostic as to whether this collection was or was not the same as the *Σωρός*. More recently Gutzwiller argued convincingly that *Σωρός* was the title of one of several collections of epigrams of Poseidippus, but she agreed that the double ascriptions pointed to a mixed collection: that collection need not, however, be one that was put together by Hedylus.¹²

6 *Anth. Pal.* 4.1.45-46 = *HE* 3970-3971: ἐν δὲ Ποσειδίππον τε καὶ Ἡδύλον, ἄγρι' ἀρούρης, | Σικελίδεω τ' ἀνέμοις ἄνθεα φυόμενα.

7 *Erbse* 3, 144, 13 f.

8 μὴ ἐμφέρεσθαι δὲ φησιν ὁ Ἀρίσταρχος νῦν ἐν τοῖς Ποσειδίππου ἐπιγράμμασι τὸν Βήρισον, ἀλλ' ἐν τῷ λεγομένῳ Σωρῶ εὐρεῖν.

9 E.g. Galli Calderini 1983; Wallace (W.; M.) 1941.

10 Gow, Page 1965, 2: 117; Cameron 1993, 369-76.

11 Cameron 1993, 374. For a collection of other poets' elegiac poetry to which the collector added some of his own cf. Euenus of Paros' part in creating an early instantiation of the *Theognidea* as hypothesised in Bowie 2012.

12 Gutzwiller 1998, 156-7, 182. See also (briefly) Krevans 2007, 133-4.

Against this briefly sketched background we may put the question whether Athenaeus' quotation of Hedylyus and Poseidippus is to be explained by his drawing the poems that he quotes from a collection in which both poets, as well as Asclepiades, were represented.

The answer is almost certainly negative. First, if that were his source, why did he not pick out some of the poems of Asclepiades bearing on *symposia*? Second, our principal knowledge of that collection derives from the *Palatine Anthology*, itself drawing ultimately from Meleager's *Garland*: if Athenaeus had used it we would expect some overlap between epigrams that he quotes and epigrams preserved in the *Palatine Anthology*.

One hypothesis might, however, be worth considering: is Athenaeus' attention drawn to Hedylyus because he has encountered the three-author collection? On this quite different hypothesis Athenaeus made his choice of which epigrammatists to consult at least partly on the basis of his encounter with a three-author collection that could readily be seen to be one chiefly of sympotic and erotic poems: he then turned to single-author editions of two of these poets, Posidippus and Hedylyus.

This is an appropriate point to return to the oddity that none of the epigrams quoted by Athenaeus by these epigrammatists is found in the *Palatine Anthology*. That could just be chance: as the new Posidippus papyrus has reminded us, the selection of Hellenistic epigrams that made its way into the *Palatine Anthology* via the *Garland* of Meleager was only a fraction of what existed and must have been available in many libraries and 'all good bookshops'. We might support this interpretation by considering the lack of overlap between Anthology poems and poems quoted by other late second-century writers. None of the following poems is in the Anthologies:

- a. Callim. fr. 393a and b Pfeiffer = *HE* 1333-1336, quoted by Diog. Laert. 2.111 and Sext. Emp. *Math.* 1.309.
- b. Callim. 6 Pfeiffer = *HE* 1293-1296, quoted by Sext. Emp. *Math.* 1.48 (and earlier by Strabo 14.638).
- c. Callim. fr. 401 Pfeiffer = *HE* 1345-1348, quoted by Heph. 64.4 Consbruch (without attribution); line 1 is later quoted at 58.20 Consbruch, where it is attributed to Callimachus.¹³
- d. Anyte *HE* 700-703, quoted by Poll. 5.48.
- e. Theaetetus *HE* 3348-3351, quoted by Diog. Laert. 4.25.
- f. Theaetetus *HE* 3368-3371, quoted by Diog. Laert. 8.48.

¹³ His phraseology is τὸ Καλλιμάχειον τοῦτο ποιημάτων.

There are indeed exceptions, almost all of which are poems of Callimachus. Thus Callim. 1 Pfeiffer = *HE* 1277-1292 = *Anth. Pal.* 7.79 is quoted by Diog. Laert. 1.79. Callim. 23 Pfeiffer = *HE* 1273-1276 = *Anth. Pal.* 7.471 (and in *API B*), a poem very widely quoted in later antiquity, is first quoted by Sext. Emp. *Math.* 1.48. Line 4 of Callim. 46 Pfeiffer = *HE* 1050 = *Anth. Pal.* 12.150.3 is quoted by Clem. Al. *Strom.* 687P. Lines 5-6 of Callim. 42 Pfeiffer = *HE* 1075-1080 = *Anth. Pal.* 12.118 are quoted by Plut. *De cohibenda ira* 5 = *Mor.* 455b without ascription to Callimachus, and all six lines were inscribed in the first century AD on the interior wall of a house on the Esquiline in Rome:¹⁴ this was an eminently quotable poem, clearly well-known. Lines 1-3 of Callimachus 39 Pfeiffer = *HE* 1137-1142 = *Anth. Pal.* 13.25 are quoted by Heph. 55.15 Consbruch, and the first line of Callim. fr. 399 Pfeiffer = *HE* 1341-1342 = *Anth. Pal.* 13.9 is quoted by Heph. 19.1 Consbruch. The first words of Callim. 48 Pfeiffer = *HE* 1165-1170 = *Anth. Pal.* 6.310 are quoted by Apollonius Dyscolus 2.493.3 Usener Callim. 2 Pfeiffer = *HE* 1203-1208 = *Anth. Pal.* 7.80 is quoted by Diog. Laert. 9.17. Note too Longus' familiarity with Callimachus, a familiarity he presumably expected to be shared by some readers.¹⁵

The situation is quite different with Posidippus. Of the poems in the Anthologies only *HE* 3150-3153 = 65 AB appears elsewhere - it is quoted by Himer. *Or.* 48.14 and is preserved on a papyrus (*P.Freiburg* 4, of the first century BC): it is in *API* (A 119) but not in *Anth. Pal.* Posidippus *HE* 3180-3189 = AB 133 is found both in *Anth. Pal.* 9.359 and in Stob. 4.34.57.

Of Mnasalces' 18 poems in the Anthologies only one, *Anth. Pal.* 7.54 = *HE* 2671-2674, a well known poem on Hesiod that also appears in the *Vita Hesiodi* (p. 51 Wil.) and the ps-Aristotelian *peplos* (19.2), is also cited in two imperial Greek texts, Paus. 9.38.4, and the *Certamen* (14 Wil.).

On the basis of this brief conspectus we might decide that the lack of overlap between the selection quoted by Athenaeus and that preserved in the Anthologies is not very surprising. Six lines of Nicaenetus is as high an overlap as we are entitled to expect, two lines of Callimachus is rather low, but it is clear that Athenaeus, like most second-century authors, had a high regard for Callimachus and could find texts from which to quote him when he wanted to. The data for Mnasalces, Phalaecus and Rhianus are too scanty to support one hypothesis rather than another. The lack of overlap in the case of Posidippus can be attributed to his very voluminous oeuvre and its dispersal among three or perhaps even four different epigrammatic books.¹⁶

¹⁴ Kaibel 1866, 3; *Epigr. Gr.* 1111.

¹⁵ See Bowie 2019b.

¹⁶ Gutzwiller l.c.

What, then, of Hedylus? Perhaps Hedylus should be explained in the same way. But there is no indication that he was as prolific as Poseidippus, and the contrast between the very few poems in the Anthologies and the eight in Athenaeus remains extremely striking. That Athenaeus must have worked from a book entitled Ἡδύλου ἐπιγράμματα is virtually certain. Either the early Hellenistic three-author collection had only a few of Hedylus' epigrams, or for some reason Meleager did not take all he found in it, so the small number of Hedylus poems in the Anthologies (viz. four) have a smaller chance of overlap than (e.g.) do the poems of Callimachus. But if the early Hellenistic three-author collection had indeed only a few of Hedylus' epigrams, and if Athenaeus knows that anthology, then another possibility emerges: Athenaeus could see that Hedylus might yield material of sympotic interest, pursued the book entitled Ἡδύλου ἐπιγράμματα to track down what he needed, then was careful not to have one of his dining characters use in their learned company a poem already easily accessible in a more popular text. Of course if this hypothesis might be entertained for Hedylus, it should also be considered for Posidippus, even though the statistics there are less surprising. It would not have taken Athenaeus long to check whether his four Posidippus poems were in the three-author collection.

One might offer the alternative hypothesis that it was precisely in the *Garland* of Meleager that Athenaeus encountered poems of Hedylus and Posidippus, and that he made his selection in such a way as to avoid overlap with that presumably relatively popular text. Against that hypothesis remains Athenaeus' greater interest in Hedylus and Poseidippus than in any other epigram poet, and his total neglect of many other poets responsible for sympotic epigrams. There is also little evidence that the *Garland* of Meleager was indeed much read late in the second century AD: perhaps a reworking of Meleager HE 4277 = *Anth. Pal.* 5.215.6 by Longus at the end of Book 1 of *Daphnis and Chloe*, a reworking that may also bring in Asclepiades (?) HE 1000 = *Anth. Pal.* 5.161.5 as an intertext.¹⁷ *Adhuc sub iudice lis est.*

17 See Bowie 2019a, 164.

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