

BRIDEGROOM NILE AND BRIDE EGYPT
(PSI VII 845^r = XXXIX 1–11 HEITSCH = 43(A) PERALE)*

by

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ABSTRACT: The article discusses some questions related to the interpretation of the hexametric poem preserved on the recto of PSI VII 845. An important issue here is the relationship between the fragment on the papyrus and the epithalamic literary tradition.

Αἰγύπτῳ Ζεῦ Νεῖλ'
(SH 604A = POWELL, CA, p. 237)

The theme of “the currents of the Nile, who floods the flats of Egypt” – to quote the famous beginning of Euripides’ *Helen*¹ – often appearing in Greek literature of all periods², has also its epithalamic treatment. The theme can be found in Nonnus’ *Dionysiaca*³ and in the anonymous hymn to the Nile⁴. A reference to the marriage of the Nile and Egypt occurs also in an epigram on Augustus’ victory at Actium⁵. There is one more text that expands our view of this motif’s employment in late Greek poetry, underestimated by scholars, as it seems. In what follows I will discuss this text and attempt to define the genre and the function of the hexametric composition.

In 1925 Medea NORSÀ published in the seventh volume of PSI⁶ the remnants of hexametric lines preserved on the recto and the verso of a sheet of a papyrus

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¹ Eur. *Hel.* 1–3: Νεῖλου [...] ῥοαί, / ὅς [...] Αἰγύπτου πέδον / [...] ὑγραίνει.

² See the wide-ranging study by Helen TOD devoted to this subject, *Rewriting the Egyptian River: The Nile in Hellenistic and Imperial Greek Literature*, Oxford 2014 (<https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:ed3c2d53-f7d6-4208-8a4c-cb84b5c27854>).

³ XXVI 235.

⁴ See the Louvre hymn to the Nile (esp. lines 7–8) with a commentary by Raffaella CRIBIORE, *A Hymn to the Nile*, ZPE CVI 1995, pp. 97–106, esp. p. 102, and TOD, *op. cit.* (n. 2), pp. 172–180.

⁵ SH 982, 9–10.

⁶ M. NORSÀ, *Frammenti di poemetti epici*, Pubblicazioni della Società Italiana per la ricerca dei papiri greci e latini in Egitto. Papiri Greci e Latini VII 1925, pp. 149–150. See also <http://www.psi-online.it/documents/psi;7;845>. The papyrus is also recorded in MP³ as 01835.000 and in LDAB as 566.