

Grenfell, Hunt, Breccia, and the Book Collections of Oxyrhynchus

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IN THE WINTER of 1905–1906, Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt made a series of three great literary finds while digging for papyri at Oxyrhynchus. In their reports on these excavations, they provided, as we shall see, rather vague information on the location of the finds, but in 1952 Eric Turner established several important points. First, when they made the second and third of their finds, Grenfell and Hunt must have been excavating in a mound known as the Kôm Ali el Gamman. Second, they were never able to excavate the mound completely, since the tomb of sheikh Ali el Gamman stood on top of it. And third, the mound was eventually excavated in 1932 by an Italian team led by Evaristo Breccia.¹ Breccia arranged for the sheikh's tomb to be moved, excavated the rest of the mound, and like Grenfell and Hunt before him found an important concentration of papyri, both literary and documentary.² Various scholars, both then and later, noticed that each of the concentrations of literary papyri might repre-

¹ E. G. Turner, "Roman Oxyrhynchus," *JEA* 38 (1952) 80 with n.8. Turner examined the notes about the site kept by Grenfell. On the connection between the excavations of Breccia and those of Grenfell and Hunt, he notes, "it seems certain that the area unexcavated [by Grenfell and Hunt] was the spot in which in 1932 Prof. Breccia retrieved the fine texts and documents published in *PSI*, XI, XII, and XIII."

² Breccia tells of his work and of moving the tomb in "Fouilles d'Oxyrhynchus," *Le Musée gréco-romain d'Alexandrie* II (Bergamo 1931/2) 36 and 45–47. The literary papyri found by Breccia and his team were published both individually and then in *PSI*, with the bulk of them in vol. XI and others in vols. XII–XIV. See *PSI* XI pp. 56–57 for introductory comments, and the Table below for a list of the papyri found by Breccia.

sent some part of an ancient library or book collection, but for many years no attempt was made to analyze the contents of the concentrations or to exploit them as a source for ancient library history.³

In the 1990s, however, Maria Serena Funghi and Gabriella Messeri Savorelli published two articles that dealt with these finds. Although their own principal interest was in identifying scribes of Oxyrhynchus, they also dealt with the contents of these concentrations of papyrus fragments. They discussed a number of lingering uncertainties and provided additional support for Turner's theses.⁴ They went on to argue that Grenfell and Hunt made their second great find at a depth of some seven meters, and that, since that was the depth at which Breccia made his finds in the same kôm, it is possible that that concentration of texts was a continuation, horizontally, of Grenfell and Hunt's second find. Thus all of these texts—some 85 manuscripts, by Funghi and Messeri Savorelli's reckoning—might have come from one and the same library, and so they proceeded to assess that collection, concluding that it may have belonged to a scholar or teacher, perhaps one active in a gymnasium.⁵

Funghi and Messeri Savorelli thus developed what could prove to be an exceptionally valuable tool for ancient library historians, namely the analysis of concentrations of ancient papyri as a way of gaining insight into the nature of ancient book collections. Not only that: if the Breccia 1932 find and Grenfell and Hunt's second find did derive from the same collection, it would be of considerable importance, for it would be the largest set of identifiable titles in any book collection other than that of the Villa of the Papyri at Herculaneum.⁶

³ For example, G. Vitelli, *PSI* XI pp.56–57, in introducing the Breccia 1932 concentration (as I will call it), noted that all the volumes found by Breccia might come from a single ancient collection. See also, on this collection as library, V. Bartoletti, *PSI* XII p.37; Turner, *JEA* 38 (1952) 89.

⁴ "Note papirologiche e paleografiche," *Tyche* 7 (1992) 78–79.

⁵ "Lo 'scriba di Pindaro' e le biblioteche di Ossirinco," *SCO* 42 (1992) [1994] 55–59.

⁶ The number of rolls recovered in the Villa of the Papyri to this point

Unfortunately, this does not seem to be the case (as we shall see), although that hardly affects the value of the methodology suggested by Funghi and Messeri Savorelli. In this article, I reconstruct, insofar as the evidence permits, the archaeology of Grenfell and Hunt's second and third finds, and argue, against Funghi and Messeri Savorelli, that Breccia's find cannot have been a continuation of Grenfell and Hunt's second find, although it may have been a continuation of their third find, or completely distinct from both. In the process we will learn something about the nature of the second find. I then adopt the methodology suggested but not fully developed by Funghi and Messeri Savorelli and consider in some detail the contents of the Breccia 1932 find.

I. The Archaeology of the Finds

We begin with what Grenfell and Hunt say in the *Egypt Exploration Fund Archaeological Report 1905–1906* pp.8–16 concerning their work of December 1905 through March 1906. They begin with the work of the first part of the season, describing on p.10 the “first find,” clearly dated to the afternoon of January 13 and the morning of January 14.⁷ Toward the top of page 12 they tell how they next turned to another mound and made further discoveries. It is crucial to understand what they say, so I will quote at length. I assign line numbers (which do not correspond to those in the original publication) for ease of reference in the discussion.

The remainder of the season was practically devoted to clearing another large and high mound, in which we were fortunate enough to discover the remains of a second classical library within

numbers about 1100: Francesca Longo Auricchio and Mario Capasso, “I rotoli della Villa Ercolanese: dislocazione e ritrovamento,” *CronErcol* 17 (1987) 43–44. We know almost nothing about what specific books were to be found in the great libraries in the city of Rome, or in the various provincial libraries known to us.

⁷ On the contents of this first find, see the list drawn up by W. E. H. Cockle, *Euripides Hypsipyle* (Rome 1987) 22 n.14. To his list we may add *P.Oxy.* XIII 1607, 1608, and 1612 (on all of which see Grenfell's Preface to *P.Oxy.* XIII), and perhaps XV 1797, which was found “in close proximity” to one of the other texts in the first find; see Hunt on 1797.

a few days after we had begun work upon it. In this mound the
 5 fourth to fifth century layers reached down to a level of 10–
 15 feet, beneath which were the Roman strata, extending below
 the crest of the mound to a depth of 30 feet. Here, about 8 feet
 from the surface, we came upon a thin layer which throughout an
 area of many square yards was full of literary fragments, while
 10 stray pieces belonging to the same texts were discovered some
 distance away. The evidence of documents found below the
 literary texts shows that the latter must have been thrown
 away in the fifth century; but the MSS. themselves are chiefly of
 the second or third century. Compared with the first literary find,
 15 the second is in point of bulk more than twice as large, and the
 MSS. probably exceed thirty in number; but as a whole it is
 hardly likely to prove so valuable, since the papyri have been
 much more broken up.

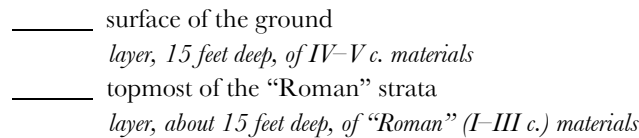
(They go on to describe a number of the specific items they found in
 this second concentration. At the bottom of p.12, they begin another
 paragraph, which continues onto p.13):

In another part of the same mound, at the unusual depth of 25
 20 feet, we made what is with one exception the largest find of
 papyri that has yet occurred at Oxyrhynchus. The bulk of it
 consists of first to second century documents; but interspersed
 among these are many literary pieces, some of which are fairly
 long. Being affected by damp, the surface of most of these papyri
 25 requires cleaning before continuous decipherment is possible.
 Apart from these two remarkable finds this mound was not
 specially productive ...

It is not easy, on the basis of this account, to reconstruct the
 archaeological context of the finds. Funghi and Messeri Savorelli
 understood all of the passage above (including lines 19–27)
 as describing the circumstances of the second find. Further,
 they took the statement that the second find had been made
 “about 8 feet from the surface” (line 7) as meaning that it was
 found about eight feet below the beginning of the Roman
 layers, which were themselves buried under some 10 to 15 feet
 of fourth- and fifth-century materials (line 5). Thus they be-
 lieved that the second find had been discovered at about 7
 meters below the surface of the ground.⁸

⁸ *SCO* 42 (1992) 55: the rolls of the second find seem to have been found
 “fra le migliaia di frammenti letterari sparsi su un’area di ‘molte iarde

Let us, however, return to the words of Grenfell and Hunt. They describe two layers, an upper one some 10 to 15 feet deep and containing, naturally enough, later materials, of the fourth and fifth centuries (line 5). Below this was a layer of earlier (“Roman”) materials, also some 15 feet deep (line 6; it began at about 15 feet and extended down to a depth of 30 feet). The crucial phrase for our understanding of the passage is in lines 7–8: “Here, about 8 feet from the surface ...” What did they mean by “here”? What did they mean by “surface”? Funghi and Messeri Savorelli took “here” as referring to what was described in the clause immediately preceding, i.e., the “Roman strata,” and “surface” as referring to the top of these lower Roman strata. This cannot be correct, for in the very next sentence Grenfell and Hunt state that the “evidence of documents found below the literary texts shows that the latter must have been thrown away in the fifth century” (lines 11–13). This must mean that the second find occurred not within the “Roman strata,” but rather in the upper layer of fourth- and fifth-century materials, since that is the only way fifth-century materials could have occurred *below* the literary texts. We must therefore take “here” as meaning “in the same kôm,” and “surface” as meaning, as one would expect, the surface of the ground. Schematically, we might present Grenfell and Hunt’s account as follows:



The literary texts of the second find were found, then, about eight feet below the surface of the ground, within the layer of later materials, showing that they were thrown out in the fifth

quadrate’ [line 9 in the passage above], trovati nel kôm Ali el Gamman ad una profondità di circa 7 metri.” In n.61 they do the math: “Cioè a circa 8 piedi (=2,5 m) dall’inizio degli strati romani i quali a loro volta si trovavano sotto quelli bizantini che scendevano nel kôm fino ad una profondità di circa 10–15 piedi (= 3–4,5 m.)” In their earlier article they had suggested that the second find was made in two distinct layers, one at a depth of about 2.5 meters, the other at about 7 meters: *Tyche* 7 (1992) 77 n.16.

(or possibly the fourth) century.

The paragraph on pp.12–13 of Grenfell and Hunt’s report (lines 19–27 above) Funghi and Messeri Savorelli took to continue the narrative of the discovery of the second find, but that is not correct. It refers rather to the third find. This is obscured by Grenfell and Hunt’s failure either to give a date for this third find, or even to refer explicitly to a “third find,” but it is made quite clear in several ways. First, in the immediately preceding part (the section summarized above) Grenfell and Hunt gave a brief account of the texts found in the second find, thus bringing their discussion of the second find to a close. At line 19, they begin a new paragraph, clearly turning to a new topic. That topic is the third find, not the second: this find was made “in another part of the same mound” (i.e., it was distinct from the second find);⁹ it was at “the unusual depth of 25 feet” (whereas the second find was made, as we have seen, at a depth of eight feet); it was “with one exception the largest find of papyri that has yet occurred at Oxyrhynchus” (thus it was a separate and distinct discovery, not a continuation of the one they had just been describing); it was part of a concentration the bulk of which was “first to second century documents” (whereas the second find was within a context of fourth- and fifth-century documents); and finally it included literary pieces “some of which are fairly long,” while the second find consisted overwhelmingly of small fragments, or, as they said on p.12, of “innumerable fragments, which range in size from some lines to a few letters.”

That this is the correct interpretation of the passage is confirmed by a letter from Grenfell to H. A. Grueber, dated February 18, 1906 (Egypt Exploration Society [EES] archives inv. no. VI e.10):

⁹ It is very unlikely that “in another part” means “in the same locale but at a lower depth.” The new paragraph implicitly signals a change of locale. They had summed up the contents of the previous (second) find at the end of the preceding paragraph, and so are clearly moving on to another topic. And if they had meant at the same spot, but at a lower depth, they could certainly have said so, easily and clearly: “In the same location, but at the unusual depth of 25 feet” etc.

In my previous letters I described the remarkable finds in the middle of January. On Jan. 27–9 we made a third, which, though it cannot be compared in importance to its predecessors, was quite exceptionally good. It consists of a very large quantity of documents (chiefly 2nd–3rd century), interspersed with numerous literary fragments. The longest (apart from Homers which are rather numerous) is 4 or 5 columns, probably of Plato. We estimate that there are enough classical pieces from that find alone to provide for one of our ordinary Oxyrhynchus volumes.

These papyri were discovered at the bottom of the deepest part of the trench, over 25 feet down; and with this great depth to go our progress through the mound is slow and costly. The last two trenches ... have been rather disappointing as regards the lower strata, but from the upper levels we have continued to find nearly every day, as I anticipated, scattered pieces belonging to the second large literary find, occasionally in handfuls. We shall after all not be able to finish even this trench in the 2½ weeks that remain ...

Clearly, this letter, which explicitly mentions the third find and dates it to January 27–29, refers to the same find as the one described by Grenfell and Hunt in lines 19–27 above. In both passages, Grenfell describes a very large find made at a depth of 25 feet, consisting primarily of documents among which were “interspersed ... many literary pieces.” Both passages state that progress through the mound was slow and a portion of it remained to be excavated. It seems clear, then, that the second find was made some eight feet from the top of the kôm, among fourth- and fifth-century documents, while the third was discovered at a depth of 25 feet, among documents of the first three centuries A.D.¹⁰ The letter also adds two useful details about the third find: it included numerous Homers and a longish piece that Grenfell thought might be Plato.¹¹

¹⁰ The sole discrepancy between the two passages is the dating of the documents, which Grenfell assigned to the second and third centuries in his letter, but to the first and second centuries in the *Archaeological Report*. A preliminary report from the field, made three weeks after the discovery, might well have depended upon a quick and incomplete survey of the documents, resulting in an inaccurate impression of their date.

¹¹ This may well be *P.Oxy.* XVII 2102, a fragment of “nine consecutive columns, the last three very fragmentary, from a roll of the *Phaedrus*.”

We turn now to Breccia's account of his discovery in 1932:

Aussitôt que nous avons pu librement disposer du Kôm Alī-el-Gammām, nous en avons commencée l'exploration méthodique. Le kôm mesurait de dix à douze mètres en hauteur. Nous l'avons divisé du haut en bas en quatre couches, enlevant chaque couche par tranchée d'un mètre à un mètre et demi de hauteur ... La première et la seconde couche nous ont donné de petits fragments en quantité appréciable mais presque tous inutilisables aux fins d'étude et de publication; la troisième couche, mieux partagée, et la partie supérieure de la quatrième nous ont finalement procuré la satisfaction de recueillir un lot considérable de manuscrits. Ce lot ne comprend pas beaucoup de pièces intactes—il y a quand même de beaux documents en parfait état de conservation—mais il constitue, paraît-il, les restes d'archives et d'une bibliothèque ayant appartenu à une même famille dont on trouve les traces aux II^{ème} et III^{ème} siècles après J. C.¹²

Although this account is not as precise as we might like, it is clear enough in basic outline. The kôm was 10 to 12 meters high, or some 33 to 39 feet. Breccia and his team excavated it in four layers, and within each layer they removed three to five feet of material at a time. Although he does not say so, it seems reasonable to assume that the layers were roughly equal in depth, and thus each was some two and a half or three meters (or about eight to 10 feet) deep.¹³ The papyri were found toward the bottom of the third layer and in the top of the fourth, and thus at a depth of some six and a half to nine meters, or roughly 22 to 30 feet. As Funghi and Messeri Savorelli saw, this corresponds very closely to the depth at which Grenfell and Hunt made the discovery they described in lines 19–27 of their report; but that was the “third find,” and not the “second find” as Funghi and Messeri Savorelli believed. In short, the archaeological evidence suggests that, if Breccia's finds are to be associated with any of Grenfell and Hunt's, it is with the third find and not the second.

This conclusion is consistent with the nature and content of

¹² Breccia, *Le Musée* 45–46.

¹³ Funghi and Messeri Savorelli interpret Breccia's account in the same way: *SCO* 42 (1992) 55 n.62.

the papyri found in the two concentrations. Grenfell and Hunt's second find consisted of hundreds or perhaps thousands of small scraps, scattered over a large area. Grenfell comments upon this repeatedly, both in the report (p.12) and in various letters, such as one written to Grueber on January 25, 1906, just before the discovery of the third find: "The second find exceeds the first in bulk, but there are fewer large pieces, while the small fragments are innumerable."¹⁴ This characteristic of the "second find," namely very large numbers of smaller fragments, shows up clearly in the papyri from that find published so far. A considerable number of the papyrus rolls are represented by dozens of small fragments: 69 of Cercidas, for example, 107 of Sophocles' *Eurypylus*, 62 of Ephorus, and so on.¹⁵ This is in striking contrast to the find made by Breccia, which—at least as so far published—includes no roll from which more than seven fragments were found.¹⁶

Another difference between Grenfell and Hunt's second find and that of Breccia 1932 is the average length of the surviving fragments. While there are in Grenfell and Hunt's second find some examples of large pieces, such as *P.Oxy.* VIII 1091 (31 almost complete lines of Bacchylides) or IX 1176 fr.39 (Satyrus' *Life of Euripides*, a remarkable section of papyrus running to 22

¹⁴ EES archives, inv. no. VI e.9. The same observation recurs in other letters. About three weeks later, Grenfell wrote Grueber again: "from the upper levels we have continued to find nearly every day, as I anticipated, scattered pieces belonging to the second large literary find, occasionally in handfuls" (e.10, of February 18, 1906). And at the end of the season, he wrote Miss Emily Paterson, "We continued excavating until March 4th in the big mound which we began in the middle of January. The last three weeks were not very exciting, but, as I anticipated, we went on up to the end finding stray pieces (sometimes quite a number together) belonging to the second large find of literary pieces" (e.11, of March 25, 1906). These descriptions of the second find also make it quite clear that it was not found all at once, but over a period of weeks.

¹⁵ Cercidas, *P.Oxy.* VIII 1082; *Eurypylus*, 1175; Ephorus, XIII 1610. Some further examples: 37 fragments of a satyr play (VIII 1083), 56 of Sappho Book 1 (X 1231), 48 of Bacchylides (XI 1361), and 68 of a work on literary criticism (XIII 1611). The list could be extended.

¹⁶ The one from which we have seven fragments is *PSI* XI 1194 + *PSI* XIV Addenda p. xv (Ar. *Thesm.*).

columns), such longer pieces are relatively rare in the second find, and Grenfell often commented upon the small size of the fragments in that find. By contrast, the papyri uncovered by Breccia in 1932 are almost all of some length, and good-sized pieces of 20 or more lines, with a good portion or almost all the lines surviving, are the norm: 28 of the 52 literary papyri Breccia found are such relatively substantial pieces.¹⁷ All of this suggests that the papyri in the two groups had different origins (one was perhaps a good deal more fragmentary when it was thrown out than the other one was) or post-depositional histories¹⁸ or both.

There is, then, no reason to believe that Breccia's finds of 1932 were a continuation of those of Grenfell and Hunt's second find, and we cannot treat the two concentrations, Breccia 1932 and Grenfell and Hunt's second find, as a single library. Can we, though, establish a connection between the Breccia 1932 concentration and Grenfell and Hunt's *third* find? Both seem to have been discovered, we have seen, at a depth of ca. 25 feet, and very probably in the same mound; and it may be that, as Funghi and Messeri Savorelli argued, the excavations of Breccia took up more or less where those of Grenfell and Hunt had left off a quarter of a century earlier.¹⁹ There is, unfortunately, very little positive evidence for a connection between the two concentrations. In part this is because it is difficult now to identify the papyri that belong to the "third find." The closest we can come at present to identifying these texts is to note that, in his Preface to *P.Oxy.* XVII, Hunt

¹⁷ These are *PSI* XI 1184–85, XI 1188, XI 1189+XIII 1379, XI 1191, 1195, 1197–98, 1200–01, 1203–06, 1208–09, 1212–13, 1215–16, 1218–20, 1222, XII 1284, XIII 1301, 1305, and XIV 1391.

¹⁸ Grenfell and Hunt's second find seems to have been caught by the wind and scattered over a wide area before it was covered by further layers of trash.

¹⁹ This cannot be established. As Funghi and Messeri Savorelli noted (*Tyche* 7 [1992] 78 with n.28), Breccia gives no indication of being aware that he was digging where anyone else had excavated previously. Perhaps there had been clandestine digging, whether for papyri or for *sebbakh*, in the intervening years. That could mean a discontinuity between the sections of the mound excavated by Breccia and by Grenfell and Hunt.

remarked (p. v) that many of the literary texts in that volume “come from the third of the large groups found in 1906.”²⁰ If we accept this, and assume that most of the fragments in XVII (and perhaps many of those in XVIII) came from the third find, then we can make several useful observations.

Both finds—Breccia 1932 and Grenfell and Hunt’s third find—tend to consist of manuscripts represented by a limited number of fragments, often of some size;²¹ both included substantial numbers of Homer papyri; and parts of one and the same roll (Callimachus’ *Aetia*) seem to have been found in each of the two groups: *PSI XI* 1217 (Breccia) and *P.Oxy. XVII 2079+XVIII 2167* (third find).²² It may also be relevant that numerous documents associated with the family of a man named Sarapion alias Apollonianus were found by Breccia, and others from the same family were published in *P.Oxy. XVII* and *XVIII*.²³ While

²⁰ Kathleen McNamee, in an unpublished paper, “Finding Libraries,” delivered at the 24th International Congress of Papyrology in Helsinki, 2004, points out that the origin of most, if not all, of the papyri in *P.Oxy. XVII* is Grenfell and Hunt’s third find. I am most grateful to Professor McNamee for her willingness to share a draft of this paper with me. As she noted, we can exclude a few of the papyri from the third find: 2081 (additional small fragments of texts belonging to the second find), 2083, 2089 (both written too late to have been discarded in the third century), and 2084 (found with VII 1015 and so in the second find).

²¹ For Breccia’s find see n.17 above. Of the literary texts in *P.Oxy. XVII*, a number are substantial in size: 2078 (three large and two smaller fragments), 2079 (most of 40 lines), 2080 (115 lines, half of them almost complete), 2087 (most of 44 lines), 2091 (most of an entire column), 2092 (good part of four columns in five fragments), 2095 (much of 40 lines), 2101 (much of 150 lines), and 2102 (“nine consecutive columns, the last three very fragmentary”). Compared to Breccia’s material, there are overall more small fragments, but in both collections good-sized pieces are common.

²² For the assignment of all these fragments to one and the same roll, see E. Lobel on *P.Oxy. XVIII 2167*. Funghi and Messeri Savorelli noted a series of connections between manuscript fragments found by Breccia and fragments found by Grenfell and Hunt: *Tyche* 7 (1992) 79. None of the *P.Oxy.* fragments so connected comes from the second find, but some might come from the third.

²³ These include XVII 2107, 2108, 2116, 2118–21, 2126, 2134, 2135, 2137, and 2138. On these, see Maria Lauretta Moioli, “La famiglia di

we cannot prove that these latter documents were the ones Grenfell and Hunt found intermingled with the literary papyri of the third find, it may be significant that Hunt apparently began to work on them at the same time that he began to work on the literary fragments from the third find. All of this makes it tempting to claim that the texts in Grenfell and Hunt's third find and those found by Breccia derived from one and the same book collection. This would, however, be premature. There are simply too many uncertainties: (1) While it appears that the third find was made in the Kôm Ali el Gamman, this cannot yet be proved with absolute certainty. (2) The archaeological reports provided by Grenfell and Hunt and by Breccia are imprecise, not least as to topography and the depth at which they made their finds. (3) In the one case of a manuscript from which fragments appear to have been discovered in both finds (Callimachus' *Aitia*), we must remember that, when discarded, papyri can be carried about a site by the wind, so that *one* example of a connection is hardly proof that all the fragments in both concentrations came from one and the same collection.

Until further evidence emerges, therefore, we must resist the temptation to combine Grenfell and Hunt's third find and Breccia 1932. For now, at least, we must work on the assumption that we have the partial remains of at least four distinct book collections at Oxyrhynchus, namely the three finds made by Grenfell and Hunt and Breccia's 1932 discoveries.²⁴ The methodology first suggested by Funghi and Messeri Savorelli—analyzing these concentrations as a way of learning about ancient book collections—remains valid, however, and the rest of this article is devoted to such an analysis of the Breccia 1932 collection.

But first a final observation concerning the nature of Grenfell

Sarapion alias Apollonianus stratego dei nomi Arsinoites ed Hermopolites," *Acme* 40 (1987) 135–136.

²⁴ Breccia also found a substantial number of texts in his excavation of the Kôm Abu Teyr in 1934—as had Grenfell and Hunt in their earlier campaigns—but nothing Breccia says in his report of this excavation indicates that he thought of these volumes as coming from a single collection.

and Hunt's second find: it is important to note that this find was not made at a single time or place.²⁵ We do not know exactly when Grenfell and Hunt began to find the literary papyri that they subsequently called the "second find." They had not yet begun to find them on January 17, for on that day Grenfell wrote to Grueber (VI e.8):

We have now just finished this mound [i.e., the one that produced the first find], and begun another, the last of the big mounds left. It is mainly 4th–6th centuries on the surface, but there are 2nd–3rd century layers underneath. Yesterday and today we came on a very large quantity of well preserved 4th century rolls (chiefly letters unfortunately) which had been thrown away together, and today there have been some very fair 3rd century documents from the lower levels. So the prospects are quite promising.

Thus they began searching the mound on January 16, but they did not immediately find literary papyri. The latter had, however, begun to appear by January 22 (to Emily Paterson, VII e.4, p.2): "Not only have we found plenty of 2nd–4th century documents (one group of 4 men filled 4 baskets on the 20th), but literary fragments (chiefly classical but some theological) have been remarkably numerous ..." From that point on, they continued to find papyri that they took as forming part of the same group until they stopped excavating early in March. Thus we should avoid giving the second find a specific date: not only do we not know the precise day on which the first finds were made, but finds continued to occur over a period of about six weeks. Even more importantly, we are obviously dependent upon the judgment of Grenfell and Hunt as to what belonged to the second find, since the fragments were widely scattered and not found at a single time or in a single place. This, of course, increases the chance that some of the pieces now assigned to this find originated in a different book collection.²⁶

²⁵ This has not been observed by earlier scholars. Funghi and Messeri Savorelli, for example, provide a specific date for the second find, namely January 16, 1906: *Tyche* 7 (1992) 76 n.15.

²⁶ For a census of the contents and an analysis of the second find, see

II. The Breccia 1932 Concentration

We turn now to an analysis of the concentration of fragments found by Breccia in 1932. Our goal is partly methodological: can we develop techniques of analysis that will help us learn something new? It is also historical: what do we learn about this collection of books, and about Roman book collections generally?²⁷ Table 1 sets out the evidence for the concentration. Column 1 lists the fragments alphabetically by author, with *adespota* at the end, with each manuscript given a number.²⁸ Column 2 provides the date at which the particular manuscript was written, the evidence being in all cases palaeographical; I rely here on the judgment of the various editors. Column 3 identifies scribes, wherever possible, according to the numbering system in Johnson's catalogue of the scribes of Oxyrhynchus,²⁹ with some indication of the characteristics of the text: whether there are marginal comments, substantial corrections, or other noteworthy elements.³⁰ In column 4, all

George W. Houston, "Papyrological Evidence for Book Collections and Libraries in the Roman Empire," in William A. Johnson and Holt Parker (eds.), *Ancient Literacies: The Culture of Reading in Greece and Rome* (Oxford 2008 forthcoming).

²⁷ I call this a "collection of books," but it is more exactly the fragments surviving from some part of an original collection. The person who discarded the manuscripts may have been discarding an entire collection, most of one, or some (small) part of one. We will see below that we can formulate some reasonable hypotheses regarding the minimum size of the original collection, but we clearly cannot know just how large the original collection was, and the analysis presented here is intended simply to provide some insight into the nature of the group of manuscripts that was discarded together.

²⁸ Each entry represents, insofar as can be determined, one manuscript. There may, of course, be several or many fragments surviving from any given manuscript.

²⁹ William A. Johnson, *Bookrolls and Scribes in Oxyrhynchus* (Toronto 2004) 61–65.

³⁰ In this concentration, most manuscripts display a sparing use of diacritical marks (accents, breathings, and the like), added sometimes by the first hand, sometimes by a second hand, sometimes by both. I do not mention such marks unless they are unusual in some way.

references are to *PSI XI* unless otherwise specified. MP indicates the online version of the Mertens-Pack database of Greek and Latin literary papyri.³¹

Table 1
Papyri found by E. Breccia in the Kôm Ali el Gamman in 1932

<i>Author (and) Work</i>	<i>Date (c. A.D.)</i>	<i>Scribe if known, marginalia if any, comments</i>	<i>Reference</i>
1. Aeschylus, <i>Diktyoulokoï</i> (a satyr play)	II	Scribe A3. Stichometric count at <i>P.Oxy.</i> XVIII 2161.ii.2.	1209+ <i>P.Oxy.</i> XVIII 2161; MP 26
2. Aeschylus, <i>Glaukos Potnieus</i>	II	Scribe A3.	1210+ <i>P.Oxy.</i> XVIII 2160; MP 28
3. Aeschylus, <i>Myrmidons</i>	I or II	Marginal gloss.	1211; MP 34
4. Aeschylus, <i>Myrmidons</i>	II	Scribe A3.	<i>PSI</i> lost + <i>P.Oxy.</i> XVIII 2163; MP 33
5. Aeschylus, <i>Niobe</i>	II	Scribe A3.	1208; MP 36
6. Aristophanes, parts of <i>Thesm.</i> 139–809	II	Three short marginalia: variants? changes of speaker? Author and title at end.	1194+ <i>PSI</i> XIV Addenda xv; MP 154
7. Arrian (?), <i>Vita Eumenis</i> (?)	II	Columns numbered; middle surviving column is no. 82. On the verso, in a later hand, part of a manual on tachygraphy.	<i>PSI</i> XII 1284; MP 168.01
8. Callimachus, <i>Aitia</i> Book 1	II		1217 A+ <i>P.Oxy.</i> XVII 2079+XVIII 2167+XIX pp.147–149; MP 195
9. Callimachus, <i>Aitia</i> Book 1	II		1217 B; MP 195
10. Callimachus, <i>Aitia</i> Books 3 and 4	I or II	Interlinear corrections in the <i>PSI</i> fragment but not in <i>P.Oxy.</i> 2170.	1218+ <i>P.Oxy.</i> XVIII 2170; MP 207.4

³¹ The database can be accessed through the “Online Resources” section of the American Society of Papyrologists website, <www.papyrology.org>.

11. Callimachus: Scholia on <i>Aitia</i>	II or early III	Many abbreviations in text. Citations of many scholars and writers.	1219; MP 196
12. Callimachus, <i>Iambi</i> 4–7 and unidentified; <i>Branchus</i>	I or II	An illegible marginal note; see Lobel, <i>P.Oxy.</i> XVIII p.184.	1216+ <i>P.Oxy.</i> XVIII 2171–72 and pp.183–184 + <i>P.Oxy.</i> XIX p.149; MP 222
13. Cratinus, <i>Ploutoi</i>	II	Interlinear corrections probably in a second hand.	1212+ <i>PSI</i> XII 1279+ <i>P.Brux.</i> inv. E. 6842; MP 253
14. Demosthenes, <i>Contra Androktionem</i> 8–9, 11–13, 15–16	II	Probably the same scribe wrote no. 33.	1203; MP 309
15. Demosthenes, <i>In Aphobum</i> 1.5–7	II	Scribe A8.	1202; MP 326
16. Demosthenes, <i>Adversus Leptinem</i> 161–63	II		1204; MP 301
17. Demosthenes, <i>Olynthiaca</i> 3.33–36	late I or II	Title at end.	1205+ <i>PSI</i> XVII Congr. 11; MP 259
18. Euphorion, parts of <i>Thrax</i> and <i>Hippomedon Maior</i>	II	Scribe A5. Numerous explanatory marginalia in intercolumnar spaces and bottom margin. Hellanicus is cited.	<i>PSI</i> XIV 1390; MP 371
19. Eupolis, <i>Prospaltioi</i> (?)	I		1213; MP 377
20. Euripides, <i>Alcmeon</i>	II	Two marginalia of indeterminate content, in a second hand.	<i>PSI</i> XIII 1302; MP 431
21. Euripides, <i>Phoenissae</i> 1027–49	II		1193; MP 423
22. Hesiod, <i>Catalogus</i>	II	Interlinear corrections.	<i>PSI</i> XIII 1301+ <i>P.Oxy.</i> XXVIII 2481 fr.3, 4, 6–12; MP 516.4

23. Hesiod, <i>Theogony</i> 566–1020. Several fragments, with many lacunae	II or III	Scribe B3. Variant readings: interlinear (568), marginal (578). 630 omitted by mistake. Title after final line.	1191+ <i>P.Oxy.</i> XXXII 2639; MP 493.2
24. Homer, <i>Iliad</i> 6.413–43, 445–50	II, prob. 1 st half	Not the same scribe as no. 25.	1184; MP 792
25. Homer, <i>Iliad</i> 6.498–529	II or III	On <i>verso</i> of documents. Not the same scribe as no. 24.	1185; MP 795
26. Homer, <i>Iliad</i> 9.401–13, 416–25	I or, less likely, II	Lines 414–15 omitted by mistake. Not the same scribe as no. 27.	1186; MP 848
27. Homer, <i>Iliad</i> 9.480–99	II, 1 st half?	Numerous interlinear corrections. Not the same scribe as no. 26.	1187; MP 849
28. Homer, <i>Iliad</i> 10.9–18, 550–79	very late II or III	Book number survives below the end of the last column.	1188+inv. 1870 ^v +inv. 1621 ^v ; MP 852.02
29. Homer, <i>Iliad</i> 23.524–55, 24.648–81	second half II c.	Almost all accents marked, in a later hand.	1189+ <i>PSI</i> XIV 1379; MP 1008
30. Homer, <i>Odyssey</i> 5.138–270 (with several lacunae)	II		1190+ <i>PSI</i> inv. 576; MP 1060
31. Homer, <i>Odyssey</i> 16.415–28	II		<i>PSI</i> XIV 1382; MP 1124
32. Isocrates, <i>Ad Nicoclem</i> 1–6, 8–9	II		1198; MP 1253
33. Isocrates, <i>De pace</i> 1	II	Probably the same scribe wrote no. 14.	1199; MP 1271
34. Lysias, <i>Epitaphios</i>	II or early III	Scribe A8.	1206; MP 1291
35. Philo, various works	III	A codex. Three different scribes. Fragments found at various times.	1207+ <i>P.Oxy.</i> IX 1173+XI 1356+XVIII 2158+ <i>P. Haun.</i> 8; MP 1344
36. Plato, <i>Gorgias</i> , parts of 447, 467–68, 486, 501	II	Marginalia appear to provide variant readings.	1200; MP 1414
37. Plato, <i>Timaeus</i> 19C–20A	II, 1 st half?	Interlinear corrections.	1201; MP 1426

38. Sophocles, <i>Oedipus Rex</i> 102–974 (lacunae)	II	Explanatory and literary marginalia in a second hand. No diacriticals.	1192+ <i>P.Oxy.</i> XVIII 2180; MP 1466. The <i>P.Oxy.</i> fr. contain parts of 12 columns.
39. Sophron, two or more mimes in one roll	I	Fragmentary marginalia of uncertain purpose.	1214; MP 1482
40. Thucydides 1.71–74	II or III	Scribe A33. Remains of four consecutive columns. Probable collation against a second exemplar (see Haslam on <i>P.Oxy.</i> 3882).	1195+ <i>P.Oxy.</i> LVII 3882; MP 1509
41. Xenophon, <i>Anabasis</i> 6.5.12–15 and 25–26	II		1196+ <i>PSI</i> XV 1485; MP 1542
42. Xenophon, <i>Hellenica</i> 5.4.43–44 and 47–54	late I or early II	Same scribe as no. 43. Interlinear corrections.	1197 fr. A & B; MP 1555
43. Xenophon, <i>Hellenica</i> 6.1.11–13, 3.5–6, 5.7–9	late I or early II	Same scribe as no. 42. Interlinear corrections.	1197 fr. C+ <i>PSI</i> XVII Congr. 8+ <i>P.Oxy.</i> II 226; MP1555
44. Fragment of a comedy	II	Only eight lines survive. One interlinear correction.	<i>PSI</i> XII 1281; MP 1636
45. Fragment of a comedy?	II		<i>PSI</i> XIV 1388; MP 1637
46. Fragment in Doric dialect, perhaps Sophron	II	Parts of six lines.	<i>PSI</i> XIV 1387, cf. Addendum p. xvi; MP 1981
47. Commentary on lyric, perhaps Pindar	II	Scribe A5. On the <i>verso</i> , a document.	<i>PSI</i> XIV 1391; MP 1949
48. Socratic dialogue	I or II		1215; MP 2098

49. Fragment of an oration in defense of a certain Didymus	II or III		1222; MP 2522
50. Novel of Ninus	I	One interlinear correction.	<i>PSI</i> XIII 1305; MP 2617
51. Novel of Staphylus	late II or early III		1220; MP 2625
52. Fragment of a work on proverbs	II		1221; MP 2298

Notes on the table entries

4. For the fragment *PSI* lost, see Vittorio Bartoletti, “Un frammento dei ‘Myrmidones’ di Eschilo,” in Alan E. Samuel (ed.), *Essays in Honor of C. Bradford Welles* (New Haven 1966) 121–123.

9. *PSI* XI 1217B is absorbed into the same entry as *PSI* XI 1217A in MP, but it is by a different scribe and so must be considered a separate manuscript.

11. The date is from Monique van Rossum-Steenbeek, *Greek Readers’ Digests? Studies on a Selection of Subliterary Papyri* (*Mnemosyne* Suppl. 175 [1998]) 77.

12. *PSI* 1216 was dated by its editor to the first century, but *P.Oxy.* 2171 by Lobel to the second.

22. Lobel on *P.Oxy.* XXVIII 2481 remarked that the fragments published there were written by the scribe who also wrote *PSI* XIII 1301, but that fragments 1(a), 1(b), 2, 5(a), and 5(b) “combine with fragments of other manuscripts.” I infer from this that fragments 3, 4, and 6–12 might come from the same manuscript as *PSI* 1301.

23. V. Bartoletti dated *PSI* XI 1191 to the second century; M. L. West dated *P.Oxy.* XXXII 2639 to the third.

28. For the additional fragments, MP cites Guido Bastianini, “Registro di versamenti in natura,” *Comunicazioni dell’Istituto papirologico G. Vitelli* 3 (1999) 77–85 (*non vidi*). The document on the *recto* is late second century, so the Homer text cannot be earlier than ca. 200.

39. J. H. Hordern, “Love Magic and Purification in Sophron, *PSI* 1214a, and Theocritus’ *Pharmakeutria*,” *CQ* 52 (2002) 167, states that the fragments come from “at least three different mimes.”

40. L. Gastri dated *PSI* XI 1195 to the second century; M. W. Haslam dated *P.Oxy.* LVII 3882 to the third.

47. This fragment, identified as a commentary on choral lyric in *PSI*, was recognized by Lobel as being relevant to a fragment of lyric that

may be by Pindar and is in any case not from a tragedy: *P.Oxy.* XXXII 2622, "Addendum" on p.65.

49. T. Bolelli, the editor of this fragment in *PSI*, says that this does not appear to be a school exercise. If he is correct, and this was a real speech delivered before an emperor, the speech may be a family document rather than a volume kept as a work of literature. The Breccia 1932 volumes were found commingled with documents of the family of Sarapion alias Apollonianus, and in his family were two different women named Didyme, either of whom might have been related to the Didymus who was the subject of the speech. Thus the speech might have been among the documents belonging to the family of Sarapion, whether or not he was the owner of the literary volumes.³²

We have, then, fragments from some 52 different manuscripts. There are, of course, problems. In 12 cases (1, 2, 4, 8, 10, 12, 22, 23, 35, 38, 40, 43), fragments of the same manuscript were found also, but separately, by Grenfell and Hunt, and if their finds represent one or more collections that are distinct from the one we have in the Breccia 1932 collection, then it is difficult to know to which collection (Breccia 1932? Grenfell and Hunt third find?) these manuscripts belonged. This problem is particularly acute for nos. 8, 12 (both Callimachus), 22 (Hesiod), 35 (Philo, the sole codex in the concentra-

³² For the two Didymai, see the stemma prepared by Moiola, *Acme* 40.2 (1987) 125. In publishing the texts found by Breccia, G. Vitelli, *PSI* XI pp. 56–57, reckoned it a "probabile ipotesi" that the literary texts belonged to the same family as the one that owned the documents, i.e., the family of Sarapion alias Apollonianus. Certainly the family we know from the documents, which was wealthy, educated, and politically active, can easily be imagined as having owned these texts. Unfortunately, there is no proof of a connection between the documents and the literary fragments. Turner, *JEA* 38 (1952) 89–90, was inclined to accept the hypothesis of Sarapion as owner, although he was well aware of the problems. W. Clarysse, "Literary Papyri in Documentary 'Archives'," *Studia Hellenistica* 17 (1983) 47, emphasized that materials found in rubbish heaps (such as our concentration) cannot be assigned to any specific context, but at n.19 he cited Sarapion, and Turner's discussion, as an "interesting case." For further discussion of this question, with bibliography, see Funghi and Messeri Savorelli, *SCO* 42 (1992) 56–58. At present, Vitelli's very first estimate of the situation still seems valid: it is quite possible, but by no means provable, that the books and documents all belonged to Sarapion or his family.

tion), and 38 (Sophocles), for in each of these cases Grenfell and Hunt found a substantially larger number of fragments, or a significantly longer fragment, than did Breccia. I will therefore avoid basing conclusions upon these manuscripts, but we need to keep them in view, since all of them may after all come from the same collection.

The contents of the Breccia 1932 concentration

Writing in 1952, Eric Turner summarized the general character of literary papyri found in Egypt: “they are predominantly classical, and contemporary prose writing is noticeably absent ... But the older writers and especially the poets are well represented.”³³ The Breccia 1932 concentration illustrates these observations well, and with only a few exceptions it reflects closely the preferences of Oxyrhynchite readers as a whole, at least insofar as we can gauge preferences from the numbers of published papyri. In the Breccia concentration, contemporary prose is underrepresented, although not completely absent: we have the Philo codex (35), a fragment probably by Arrian (7), two novels (50, 51) and a contemporary speech (49)—in all, five manuscripts from a total of 52.³⁴ In contrast, 17 of the 19 identified authors are classical writers, with the poets particularly well represented. Homer and Hesiod, the three great tragedians, the three great writers of Old Comedy (Aristophanes, Cratinus, Eupolis), Callimachus, and Euphorion are all present. Among prose writers, the collection includes orators (Demosthenes, Isocrates, Lysias), historians (Thucydides, Xenophon), and Plato. The standard nature of the collection appears clearly when we compare it to the frequency tables assembled by Krüger. Of the 10 authors represented by the largest numbers of papyri from Oxyrhynchus, only two, Herodotus and Menander, are not found in the Breccia concentration, and 13 of the 19 authors present in the collection are among the 25 authors most frequently

³³ *JEA* 38 (1952) 90–91.

³⁴ We could perhaps add the work on proverbs (52), but on the other hand the Philo codex may not belong to this collection, and the speech for Didymus may be a document, not part of the library collection.

attested at Oxyrhynchus.³⁵ This is, in short, a largely conventional and traditional collection.³⁶

The collection included at least some duplicate copies. There are two copies of Aeschylus' *Myrmidons* (3, 4), two of *Iliad* Book 6 (24, 25), two of *Iliad* Book 9 (26, 27), and perhaps two of Callimachus' *Aitia* Book 1 (8, 9; but 8 might belong to Grenfell and Hunt's third find). This is, of course, not surprising. Duplicates are known from the collection of the Villa of the Papyri at Herculaneum, in ancient inventories of book collections we sometimes seem to find duplicate copies, and we might have expected duplicates to appear in any case.³⁷ The collection also

³⁵ Julian Krüger, *Oxyrhynchus in der Kaiserzeit. Studien zur Topographie und Literaturrezeption* (Frankfurt am Main/New York 1990) 214–215. Herodotus appears, it seems, in Grenfell and Hunt's third find: *P.Oxy.* XVII 2095–2098. If that find and Breccia 1932 originated in the same collection, it would have included Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon. The six writers in our concentration but not among Krüger's top 25 are Arrian, Cratinus, Eupolis, Lysias, Philo, and Sophron.

³⁶ Grenfell and Hunt's third find (assuming it is represented by *P.Oxy.* XVII) is in general consistent with and in some respects complementary to the Breccia 1932 concentration. It includes fragments of Hesiod, Sophocles, Euripides, Callimachus, Thucydides, Plato, and Xenophon, all also in Breccia 1932. It adds Herodotus, Sappho, Pindar, and Lycophron; it includes what appear to be scholia on Euphorion (an author represented in Breccia 1932) and a treatise on rhetoric, which is an interest of the Breccia concentration. For all of these items, see the "Table of Papyri" in *P.Oxy.* XVII pp. ix–x.

³⁷ At least 10 works are present in two or more different manuscripts in the collection of the Villa of the Papyri: Marcello Gigante, *Catalogo dei Papiri Ercolanesi* (Naples 1979) 59. For an inventory of a book collection that probably contained duplicates, see Rosa Otranto, *Antiche liste di libri su papiro* (Rome 2000) 29–38 (= *P.Oxy.* XXXIII 2659), a list of comedies in which the names of three plays of Epicharmus are repeated. We cannot be quite sure that this repetition of titles is evidence of duplicate copies; for a discussion of this problem, see Otranto 37. Duplicates in a collection could arise for any of a number of reasons: a friend might give you something you already owned; you might buy a small existing collection that included an item you already owned; you might acquire a new copy to replace a tattered older one, but then keep the old one as well; and so on. Or, of course, the book collector might simply have had some favorite books. We can compare the situation in the Villa of the Papyri, where some books of Epicurus' *Peri*

probably included a number of complete editions of various works or authors. The presence of fragments from Books 6, 9, 10, 23, and 24 of the *Iliad* almost certainly indicates that the original collection had one or more complete copies of the *Iliad*. The collector(s) probably had, or aimed at having, complete editions of Callimachus' *Aitia*, since we have fragments from three of the four books (9, 10), and of Xenophon's *Hellenica*, given the presence of Books 5 and 6 (of the seven in the whole work) in copies prepared by one and the same scribe (42, 43). If we accept the possibility of such complete editions (meaning copies of all the books of a given work, not necessarily by the same scribe or even produced at the same time), and if we assume that a book collection that included two copies of Aeschylus' *Myrmidons* was likely also to include all of the most famous plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, then we would arrive at a presumptive library considerably larger than the one concretely attested by the fragments, perhaps numbering some hundreds of volumes.³⁸ That is, the extant fragments seem to imply a substantial, but not an enormous, collection.

Not all collections known to us were general collections of largely classical works like this one. At Herculaneum, the volumes recovered so far were clearly the library of a specialist in Epicurean philosophy, and Alexander Jones has recently identified a collection of at least 45 astronomical and astrological texts from Oxyrhynchus that were found together and evidently constitute a special collection.³⁹ Quite apart from such highly specialized collections, we know of general collections

physios were present in two or more copies. David Sedley, *Lucretius and the Transformation of Greek Wisdom* (Cambridge 1998) 98–102, discusses these multiple copies and suggests that at least some of the duplication may be due to certain books being favored or regarded as more important.

³⁸ Homer might well require 24 volumes, 12 each for the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; Xenophon's *Hellenica* would be in seven volumes; a representative collection of the dramatists might easily require 30 rolls; and so on.

³⁹ Gigante, *Catalogo* 53–55, provides a list of the authors and titles attested at Herculaneum. The astronomical texts are “Group A” in A. Jones, *Astronomical Papyri from Oxyrhynchus (P. Oxy. 4233–4300a) I–II* (Philadelphia 1999). Jones identified an additional 11 manuscripts as possibly belonging to this collection.

that had far more clearly defined special interests than the Breccia concentration. An example is Grenfell and Hunt's second find, which is noteworthy for its heavy emphasis on poetry, especially early lyric. Among the 35 items in this second find are at least five manuscripts of Alcaeus, two of Sappho, four or more copies of works of Pindar (in, it seems, at least seven rolls), two works of Bacchylides, and a single volume of Ibycus, as well as the Hellenistic poets Callimachus, Cercidas, and Theocritus.⁴⁰ Grenfell and Hunt's second find is considerably less balanced than Breccia 1932, or, to put it the other way round, the contrast with Grenfell and Hunt's second find helps to highlight the general and traditional nature of the Breccia collection, with its broadly-based selection of popular (but classical) authors.

Dates, scribes, and production

The date at which this group of texts was thrown on the Oxyrhynchus dump can be established with a fair degree of precision, for, as noted above, the fragments were found commingled with documents pertaining to Sarapion alias Apollonius, and the latest date on any of those documents is A.D. 265 (*PSI* XII 1249, XII 1250). If the documents were kept for about a generation after that, they and the literary texts found with them would have been discarded around the year 300. This date is of considerable interest, since it allows us to determine the approximate age of the literary manuscripts at the time they were thrown away. In the Breccia 1932 concentration, at least 31 manuscripts, or 60% of the total, were copied in the second century, and so were roughly 100 to 200 years old when they were disposed of. Only three (19, 39, 50), or 6%, can be securely assigned to the first century, while eight others (3, 10, 12, 17, 26, 42, 43, 48) date to the first or second century. None is earlier than the first century A.D. In this collection, then, the norm seems to have been some 150 to 200 years of use, with a few manuscripts having useful lives of up to three centuries.

In this respect, the Breccia concentration varies a bit from

⁴⁰ Houston, in Johnson/Parker, *Ancient Literacies*, Table 3.

some other known collections. The book collection from the Villa of the Papyri at Herculaneum, as so far known, included about 1100 volumes, and of those, seven seem to have been written in the third century B.C., 16 in the second century B.C., and most of the rest in the first century B.C.⁴¹ That is, 23 volumes were more than 200 years old when they were covered by Vesuvius, and had the eruption not covered the Villa, the entire collection would presumably have remained usable for at least two centuries, and perhaps for considerably longer. In Grenfell and Hunt's second find, which was discarded around A.D. 400, one manuscript (Ibycus, MP 1237) seems to date to the second century B.C., and so was at least 500 years old when it was thrown out, while five others date to the first century A.D. (MP 55, 179, 216, 237, 1495) and so survived for more than 300 years. This second find included fragments from 35 manuscripts or sets of manuscripts, so that some 16% of the texts were over 300 years old when they were discarded.⁴² Despite these variations in the ages of manuscripts found in different collections, we can draw a few general conclusions. It would be reasonable to assume, on the basis of this evidence, that papyrus rolls could be expected to last 200 years under normal use, that a significant percentage of them would last for 300 years, and that a few remained usable for as much as 500 years, perhaps because they were made of higher-quality materials or were seldom used.

Most, and probably all, of the manuscripts in the Breccia 1932 concentration published so far were professionally produced. The editors in *PSI* refer to many of the manuscripts as "edizioni di lusso,"⁴³ but we now know that the phenomena

⁴¹ For the total number of volumes, see n.6 above. The dates of the volumes from the Herculaneum library are from G. Cavallo, *Libri scritte scribi a Ercolano* (1983) 28–29, 50, 56–57. His "Group A" dates from the third century, "Groups B and C" from the second, and virtually all of the rest from the first century B.C.

⁴² Houston, in Johnson/Parker, *Ancient Literacies*, Table 3.

⁴³ Thus, for example, of nos. 6, 21, 28, 38, 43, and many others. When they do not describe a manuscript as *di lusso*, they usually state that the *scrittura* is *bella*, *elegante*, *calligrafica*, or some combination of such adjectives.

they took as indications of “deluxe” volumes are, in general, simply signs of a professionally produced text, and that is what we have in this collection.⁴⁴ Ten of the manuscripts—almost 20%—were copied by scribes whose hand has been identified elsewhere,⁴⁵ and four other manuscripts were produced by scribes each represented by two manuscripts in this collection.⁴⁶ The numbering of columns in no. 7 (Arrian?) may also be a sign of a professional copyist at work.

That the scribes were not in-house slaves is indicated in one particular case (1, Aeschylus) by the presence of a stichometric count, implying that the copyist was working for pay, and by the fact that the five identified scribes whose work is represented in this collection are all known from work found in other archaeological contexts as well. That is, they seem to have been scribes who prepared copies for sale to the general public (whether on commission or as speculative copies we cannot know), rather than for the owner(s) of this collection alone. The identified scribes are not concentrated in any single period of time. Instead, their dates reflect those of the collection as a whole. Thus the scribe who copied at least two books of Xenophon’s *Hellenica* (42, 43) was active in the late first or early second century; two scribes date a century later (A33, who copied no. 40, and B3, who copied no. 23); and the others (A3, A5, and A8) were all active at some point in the second century. So far as we can tell, then, no single owner commissioned or bought a large number of the works in this concentration at any one time.

This makes it difficult to know how and when the collection came together. At one extreme, we could posit some one person assembling the collection early in the third century, com-

⁴⁴ Johnson, *Bookrolls* 155–160. A few texts in this concentration might be taken as non-professional, for example nos. 11 (Callimachus; not a calligraphic hand) and 27 (*Iliad*; an unusually large number of corrections).

⁴⁵ Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5 (all Aeschylus), by Scribe A3; 15 and 34 by Scribe A8; 18 and 47 by Scribe A5; 23 by Scribe B3; 40 by Scribe A33. For these scribes, see Johnson, *Bookrolls and Scribes* 61–65.

⁴⁶ Nos. 14 (Demosthenes) and 33 (Isocrates), by one hand, and the two manuscripts each containing one book of Xenophon (42, 43) by another.

missioning some copies (the few of third-century date) and buying secondhand works at auction or singly from dealers.⁴⁷ On the other hand, we might imagine individuals over several generations commissioning and buying volumes, or acquiring them in other ways such as inheritance or gift, then passing on the bulk of the collection (not necessarily within their own family) until the collection reached its final form early in the third century.⁴⁸ In this case, the collection, although constantly evolving, would have had a life of some two centuries, from about 100 to 300. Whatever the exact mechanism by which these books came to belong to one collection, an important conclusion emerges: given the long span of time during which the manuscripts were copied—some two centuries—it is probably not justifiable to speak of “an owner,” for there may well have been several successive owners of the collection, or of various versions of it.

The character and uses of the collection

As we have seen, the works we find in the Breccia 1932 concentration are for the most part the great classics of the past, from Homer to Callimachus, and the content of the collection could fairly be called traditional, even predictable. Can we go further than this? Are there aspects of these texts that might help us assess who used them, and how? Do we find evidence, for example, that this was at least at some point a scholar’s, or a teacher’s, collection?⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Raymond J. Starr, “The Used-Book Trade in the Roman World,” *Phoenix* 44 (1990) 148–157, questioned whether there was any substantial used-book trade in the Roman world. Despite Starr’s doubts, there clearly was some such trade: Hor. *Epist.* 1.20.9–13, for example, would make no sense if Horace’s readers were not fully familiar with the sale of used books.

⁴⁸ McNamee, “Finding Libraries,” suggested a similar pattern of gradual growth, perhaps over several generations, for the collection represented by Grenfell and Hunt’s second find.

⁴⁹ Funghi and Messeri Savorelli, *SCO* 55 (1992) 58–59, argued that it was a scholar’s collection, perhaps one who used the texts in his teaching. Their analysis, however, was based upon the assumption that the Breccia 1932 concentration and Grenfell and Hunt’s second find were both part of a single collection, and that assumption, we now know, is not correct.

We can begin with the evidence in support of such a thesis. Most importantly in this regard, several of the texts include marginal notes. In two cases (18, Euphorion, and 38, *Oedipus Rex*) these are extensive and include notes that explain references in, or comment on the contents of, the text. A third manuscript (36, Plato's *Gorgias*) contains marginalia of uncertain content: they might be explanatory, or they may simply provide variant readings. Six further texts (3, 6, 12, 20, 23, 39) contain one or more shorter or fragmentary marginal notes. We might assume, but cannot prove, that they indicate a scholarly interest in the text.⁵⁰ One thing we *can* demonstrate is a desire, common in literary papyri, to provide a reasonably accurate text, for at least nine manuscripts include interlinear corrections,⁵¹ and the Thucydides text (40) seems to have been collated against a second exemplar.

The collection includes two commentaries, one of them (11) on Callimachus' *Aitia*. Since we also have three manuscripts of the text of the *Aitia* (8, 9, 10), we can assume an intense interest in this work, and the commentary, which provides literary comments, prose summaries, and background information, may well have been aimed at a scholar, since it includes many abbreviations.⁵²

Finally, the collection as we know it is particularly strong in five authors. First, Aeschylus (1–5): fragments of five manuscripts, four of them by a single scribe and so perhaps part of a

⁵⁰ Thus, for example, no. 12 (Callimachus) contains a single (illegible) note, and 23 (Hesiod) provides variant readings but, so far as we know, no explanatory notes. The fragments are short, however, and if we had longer sections of these texts we might find larger numbers of marginal notes.

⁵¹ Nos. 10, 13, 22, 27, 37, 42, 43, 44, 50.

⁵² On this fragment, see van Rossum-Steenbeek, *Greek Readers' Digests?* 77–78, 81. She takes the abbreviations and the inclusion of literary comments as signs that this is a scholar's text, but most of the abbreviations would be easy enough for any experienced reader. They include κ for $\kappa\alpha\iota$, τ for $\tau\acute{\omega}\nu$, and the like; and $-\acute{\omega}\nu$ is often omitted from genitive plurals. Some of the abbreviations, however, would be more difficult, e.g. $\sigma(\nu\mu)\mu\epsilon\acute{\iota}\xi\alpha\varsigma$.

comprehensive, commissioned set of plays.⁵³ Second, Callimachus (8–12): fragments of four manuscripts and a commentary survive; but this collection may be misleading, if 8, 10, and 12 belong rather to Grenfell and Hunt's third find. Third, Demosthenes (14–17): parts of four speeches, two of them copied by scribes known also from other works and, in all likelihood, specific commissions. Fourth, Homer (24–31): the collection probably included copies of all of the books of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, with duplicates of at least some books of the *Iliad*. Fifth, Xenophon (41–43): fragments of both the *Hellenica* and the *Anabasis*; the two manuscripts of the *Hellenica*, both by the same scribe, may have formed part of a complete edition of that work. For each of these five authors, we thus have not only two or more manuscripts, but also some indication of a special interest, such as a commentary, duplicate copies, or evidence of multi-volume sets.

Thus there are several indications of a professional interest in the collection, or parts of it, and of the texts being used by a scholar or teacher. But several considerations weigh heavily against such a scenario. The marginalia are not particularly remarkable in either number or content, but more or less typical of literary papyri in general. Two or three manuscripts, or some four to six percent of the whole, certainly contain substantial marginal notes. Kathleen McNamee estimates that roughly 5% of all known literary papyri contain such marginal notes, or roughly the same proportion as in our collection.⁵⁴ It is true that adding the other six manuscripts that have some sign of marginal notes would give us a total of nine, or 17% of the collection, significantly higher than the average; but in all six of these cases the traces of marginalia that survive suggest variant readings or very brief glosses, rather than learned notes. We can contrast Grenfell and Hunt's second find, in which 16

⁵³ In addition, there may have been duplicate copies of Aeschylus' *Myrmidons*, if no. 4 belongs in this collection rather than in Grenfell and Hunt's third find.

⁵⁴ Personal communication, September 22, 2006. The evidence will be set out in the Introduction of her forthcoming book, *Annotation in Greek and Latin Texts from Egypt*.

of 35 manuscripts or groups of manuscripts, or some 45% of the whole concentration, contain substantial marginal notes that cite other sources for variant readings, explicate matters in the text, or both: that is much more likely what a scholar's collection would look like.⁵⁵ In addition, there is not a single text in Breccia 1932 that has especially learned or scholarly notes, whereas Grenfell and Hunt's second find includes a number of manuscripts with extended marginalia in which sources are cited or the text is explained.⁵⁶

Another factor to consider is the range of authors and genres represented. The five authors whom we identified as particular interests of the collection encompass no fewer than five distinct genres: tragedy, elegy, oratory, epic, and history (Aeschylus, Callimachus, Demosthenes, Homer, Xenophon). This looks more like the collection of a general reader with some particular favorites than the library of a scholar or a teacher, especially when we add the two novels (50, 51) and the mimes of Sophron (39 and perhaps 46). Here too Grenfell and Hunt's second find provides an instructive contrast: of its 35 manuscripts, at least 14, or 40%, are texts of the early lyric poets Alcaeus, Bacchylides, Ibycus, Pindar, and Sappho. That concentration, that is, reveals a clear and demonstrable focus on a specific type of literature, while the fragments of the Breccia concentration so far published do not encourage us to imagine an owner or

⁵⁵ Houston, in Johnson/Parker, *Ancient Literacies*.

⁵⁶ Some examples: MP 55 (Alcaeus), citing Myrsilus; MP 61 (Alcaeus), with a note on the myth of Sisyphus; MP 179 (Bacchylides), citing Ptol(emaus?); MP 1368 (Pindar), including notes on grammar and myth; MP 1421 (Plato), containing extremely learned notes, on which see Kathleen McNamee and Michael L. Jacovides, "Annotations to the Speech of the Muses (Plato *Republic* 546B–C)," *ZPE* 144 (2003) 31–50. If we added the manuscripts from *P.Oxy.* XVII (which seems to include much of Grenfell and Hunt's third find), the picture would change, but not dramatically: we would add two texts with extensive explanatory marginalia (2076, Sappho, and 2080, Callimachus), as well as a number of others that contain at least some hints of marginal comments. The total number of manuscripts would also rise to about 76, however, so that the proportion of annotated texts would not rise markedly.

owners focused on any particular topic.⁵⁷

To this point, I have based my discussion of this collection on the assumption that it belonged to one or a succession of private individuals or families, but it is also possible that it formed some part of a municipal library or of the library in a semi-public institution such as a gymnasium.⁵⁸ I see no way at present to establish the nature of the original collection(s) from which these manuscripts derived. The volumes in the collection were, as we have seen, professionally produced and almost invariably written on the *recto*, with the *verso* left blank. Is that evidence that they came from a gymnasium's collection?⁵⁹ Or might it indicate rather that they belonged to a wealthy individual or family who wanted handsome volumes of the classical authors?⁶⁰ The volumes in the Villa of the Papyri at Herculaneum were professionally produced, and among them only two opisthographs have been identified to date.⁶¹ That provides at least some evidence that a private library could consist of such handsome volumes,⁶² but a municipal library might

⁵⁷ The commentary on Callimachus (11), which van Rossum Steenbeck, *Greek Readers' Digests?* 81, took as aimed at a scholar, could have been acquired to assist in reading and understanding the several manuscripts of Callimachus the collection apparently possessed. It may well indicate that the person who bought it was well educated and a serious reader, but not necessarily a scholar.

⁵⁸ There is at present no clear evidence for the existence at Oxyrhynchus of either a municipal library or a library in the gymnasium, but there certainly was a gymnasium, and either or both types of library might have existed in the town. For the gymnasium, see Krüger, *Oxyrhynchus* 107, and for a general discussion of this matter see Funghi and Messeri Savorelli, *SCO* 42 (1992) 60–61. On the possibility of libraries in gymasia, see Bernard Legras, *Lire en Egypte, d'Alexandre à l'Islam* (Paris 2002) 103–104.

⁵⁹ So Krüger, *Oxyrhynchus* 160–161.

⁶⁰ This is the suggestion of Peter van Minnen, "Boorish or Bookish? Literature in Villages in the Fayum in the Graeco-Roman Period," *JfJP* 28 (1998) 107–108, specifically rejecting Krüger's hypothesis.

⁶¹ Cavallo, *Libri* 27 and 19.

⁶² The evidence is obviously not ideal. Herculaneum is not in Egypt; the Villa of the Papyri belonged to a particularly wealthy person who might have owned an atypical collection; the condition of the volumes recovered there seems to make it difficult to tell if they were opisthographs or not.

well have done so, too; we simply have no evidence on the quality or nature of the volumes in Roman public libraries, at any time or place. The odds, of course, favor the hypothesis of a personal collection, because there would have been at most one municipal and one gymnasium library in Oxyrhynchus, while there no doubt were numerous private collections. But good odds hardly constitute proof.⁶³

While uncertainties remain, and we cannot answer all of the questions we have about the collection of books represented by the Breccia 1932 finds, there are a number of observations we *can* make. We have a coherent group of books constituting a general collection of classical works of Greek literature, together with a few novels, other recent items, and reference works.⁶⁴ The collection was copied over a period of some two centuries, brought together not later than the early third century, and discarded around A.D. 300. It included duplicates of some works and, almost certainly, complete sets of some works or authors. The texts in it were prepared professionally, to high standards, by a considerable number of different scribes, and there is no positive evidence of in-house work on the texts. It is not a collection of technical works assembled by a specialist, and it does not seem to have been owned by teachers or scholars, for although there are signs of careful reading, annotation, and other marks of scholarship, 32 of the manuscripts, or almost two-thirds of the whole collection, show no such signs at all. The collection was meant to be appreciated aesthetically, since the volumes were almost all handsome, and to be read rather than worked on. Here, perhaps for the first time, we

⁶³ It should also be noted that the core of municipal libraries may sometimes have consisted of volumes that originally belonged to private individuals. We know of founders of libraries who contributed not only the building, but also the basic book collection. This is true of the library of Pantainos in Athens (*SEG XXI* 703), the library of Celsus at Ephesus (*I.Ephesos VII.2* 5113), and probably of a library at Volsinii in Italy (*CIL XI* 2704). That is, a given collection of manuscripts, even if it ended up in a municipal library, might also have been a private collection earlier in its life.

⁶⁴ As “reference works” I have in mind the commentaries (11, 47), the work on proverbs (52), perhaps the manual on tachygraphy on the *verso* of 7, and, if we add Grenfell and Hunt’s third find, a lexicon (*P.Oxy. XVII* 2087).

seem to have a glimpse into the collections of cultured, but non-scholarly, readers of Roman Egypt.⁶⁵

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