

# Menander Rhetor and Alexander Claudius in a Papyrus Letter

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**A**MONG THE NUMEROUS PAPYRI both documentary and literary that came to light in Otto Rubensohn's excavations<sup>1</sup> at Ashmounein (Hermupolis) between 1903 and 1906, there is a letter which turns out to be of considerable interest (*P.Berol.* 21849). The papyrus is of fairly poor quality and is damaged at the top so that the ends of the first two lines are missing, and at the bottom where the last two lines are incomplete. Its measurements are: height 12 cm., width 17.3 cm. The author started writing his letter across the fibres on the smoother side of the leaf, then turned it over and added a postscript in a corner of the *verso* side, also across the fibres. On the same side, running more or less through the middle, is the address, written along the fibres in rather stylized narrow uncials but probably by the same hand (see PLATE 10). The handwriting on the recto is a practised but inelegant cursive which resembles *P.Merton* II 95. I would assign it to the second half of the fifth rather than to the sixth century.

Τῷ κυρίῳ μο[υ  
ἐναρέτῳ ἀδελφῷ [Θεογνώστῳ  
Βίκτωρ χ(αίρειν)  
Κατα[ξι]ούτῳ ἢ ἐπὶ λογιότητι διδόναι Ἡλία  
π[.]·υλῶ τῷ παιδὶ τοῦ κυρίου τοῦ γραμματι-  
5 κοῦ τὸ βιβλίον ὅπερ δέδωκα τῇ ἐπὶ ἀ-  
δελφότητι τυγχάνοντι ἐπὶ τῆς Ἐρμουπο-  
λιτῶν· οἶδεν γὰρ ὁ θεός, ἀναγκάζομαι {α}  
οὐχ ὡς ἔτυχεν / ἔστιν δὲ Ἀλεξάνδρου Κλαυ-  
10 δίου τῶ [ ] εἰς Δημοσθένην τὸν ῥήτορα  
[ ] Μενάνδρου τέχνην ἐν τάχει[

<sup>1</sup> On which see now *BGU XII*, Introduction xiv ff. The letter published here (*P.Berol.* 21849) was found on 24 January 1905. It is now in the papyrus collection of the Egyptian Museum in West Berlin (Schloss-Str. 70, D-1 Berlin 19).

VERSO (in the top lefthand corner, across the fibres):

καὶ μεθόδους  
καὶ ἐγκώμια  
ἐν τάχ[ει]  
/

Address (along the fibres):

Ρ ὙΠΟΜΝΗΣΤΙΚΟΝ ΠΡ(ὸς) ΘΕΟΓΝΩ-  
ΣΤΟΝ Π(αρά)ΒΙΚΤΟΡ(ος)

#### TRANSLATION

(Recto) “To my lord and virtuous brother Theognostus, greetings (from) Victor.

“May your eloquence deign to give Elias P. .ylus (?), the schoolmaster’s slave, the book which I gave your brotherliness when you were in Hermupolis—for God knows, I am in dire need!—namely (the commentary) on the orator Demosthenes by Alexander Claudius . . . . (and) Menander’s ‘Art’, quickly

(Verso) “and the ‘Methods’ and the ‘Eulogies’, quickly.”

(Address) “Reminder to Theognostus from Victor”

#### NOTES ON THE TEXT

2. Θεογνώστῳ is supplied from the address on the verso.
4. ἡ σὴ λογιότης: an honorary title often applied to advocates (σχολαστικοί) and defensores (ἔκδικοι), e.g. in *P.Oxy.* VI 902; see P. Koch, *Die byzantinischen Beamtentitel* (Diss. Jena 1903) 84f; O. Hornickel, *Ehren- und Rangprädikate in den Papyrusurkunden* (Diss. Giessen 1930) 27f; A. Claus, ‘Ο Σχολαστικός (Diss. Köln 1965) 59 n.5 and 85. It is also used informally in private letters, e.g. in *SB V* 8003.8 and in *P.Ross.Georg.* III 9.19.
5. π[.]υλω: this seems to be either Elias’ second name or an adjective used as a nickname. Unfortunately, the letter before υ can not be identified with certainty: it looks like γ or τ, but κ cannot be ruled out; it was certainly not ο or α. If this is a name it might be Π[ε]κύλω, cf. *P.Oxy.* XIV 1751.2 and *P.Berl.Zilliacus* 12.14 (the form Πεκύλλος is more frequent, see Preisigke, *Namenbuch s.v.*). If it is a nickname I would suggest π[ι]τύλω ‘mad’, ‘raving’ (although in this case one would expect the article), or perhaps π[ω]κύλω=*proculum*? Slaves often had two names, the second of which was sometimes a kind of pet name like Πολυδεύκης ἐπικεκλήμενος “*Ερωσ* in *BGU II* 447.25 and *Ἰσιδώρα ἢ καὶ Ἡδίστη* in *P.Meyer* 9.12, or Φιλέταιρος and Οὐίτλος (*vitulus*) in *BGU IV* 1114.7–8, or *Ἀνιλλα* (*anilla* ‘little mother’?) in *P.Oxy.* VI 903.32 and *P.Mich.* IX 546.11, or some

auspicious name like *Πασιών ὁ διὰ λόγων Εὐτυχής* and *Ἄρπαλος ὁ διὰ λόγων Νικηφόρος* in *P.Meyer* 9.11, or *Ἀγαθήμερος* and *Ἐπάγαθος* in *BGU IV* 1033.10–18, or *Αἰλανοῦς ὀνόματι Καλημέρα* in *SB V* 8007.4, or *Ἀβάσκαντος* in *P.Mich.* IX 549.7.<sup>2</sup> Occasionally, however, we do find slaves called by genuine nicknames like *Philargyrus* in *Petronius* 70.10 and in *BGU IV* 1116.40, or *Στύππαξ* and the slave-girl *Ἐμπορίον* in *P.Lille I* 27 (=Wilcken, *Chrestomathie* 199).<sup>3</sup>

- 6–7. *τῆ ἑῆ ἀδελφότητι*: this formula does not occur before the fourth century.<sup>4</sup> It does not, of course, imply that Victor and Theognostus were brothers in the literal sense; it does imply, however, that they were Christians: see *I Pet.* 2.17 and 5.9.
8. *οἶδεν γὰρ ὁ θεός*: this Christian formula of affirmation is found fairly frequently in letters from the third century onwards.<sup>5</sup> *ἀναγκάζομαι*: Victor first wrote *ἀναγκαζόμεθα*, then corrected *εθ* to *αι* but forgot to delete the last *α*. For the meaning of *ἀναγκάζεσθαι* in its (rare) absolute use, cf. *Thuc.* 8.99; Sophocles, *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, s.v., quotes Achmet, *Oneirocrit.* 186 p.144.24 Drexl *εἰ μὲν ἐστι βασιλεὺς ὁ ἰδῶν, ἀνθρώπους ἠναγκασμένους χαροποιῆσει* ('in distress').
9. *ἔστιν δέ* 'namely', 'to wit', does not affect the syntax (see Mayser, *Grammatik der griech. Papyri* II 1 §18.3 on *ὁ ἔστιν*), so the following accusatives still depend on *διδόναι* in line 3.
10. *τω* [: the uncertain letter is most likely *τ* (just possibly *ψ*). There is a blank space after the *ω*, then a gap for 2–3 letters. One might suggest

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Ἀβάσκαντος ἀπελεύθερος* in *P.Oxy.* IV 716 and *SB V* 7515.390; the ill-behaved slave *Εὐτυχής* in *P.Mich.Michael* 28, and *Εὐτυχής ἀπελεύθερος* in *P.Rein.* II 100.1; the slave-girls *Τυχαροῦς* in *P.Oxy.* III 634 and *Τύχη ἢ καὶ Ταπάεις* in *P.Mich.* V 322a.14, etc. There are many more examples of this kind in the latest list of papyri concerning slaves in Oxyrhynchus compiled by J. F. Fichman, "Sklaven und Sklavenarbeit im spätrömischen Oxyrhynchus," *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 1973 pt.2, 156ff. On slave names in classical Athens, see H. Philipp, *Tektonon daidala* (Berlin 1968) 78.

<sup>3</sup> On double names, see Rita Calderini, *Aegyptus* 21 (1941) 221–260 and *Aegyptus* 22 (1942) 3–45; on double names of slaves in particular, see her remarks *Aegyptus* 21 p.247. For lists of slave names, cf. *P.Lille I* 27; *BGU IV* 1114; *P.Oxy.* VIII 1110; *P.Flor.* I 4 (=Wilcken, *Chrestomathie* 206), and the evidence collected by Fichman, *loc.cit.* For nicknames, cf. e.g. *SB X* 10277.20 *Σαραπίων ὁ ξηρός*; *P.Tebt.* II 283.8 *Πατῦνις ὁ ἐπικαλούμενος κωφός* and 414.7 *Πᾶσις ὁ κόρυφος* (the latter is explained by the scholion on Theocr. 62/63a p. 152 Wendel *οὕτω καὶ παρὰ Ἀλεξανδρεῦσι κόρυφος λέγεται ὁ ὡς κόρη οἰφώμενος*, as was pointed out by B. Olsson, *Papyrusbriefe aus der frühesten Römerzeit* [Uppsala 1925] no.36.1–2 note).

<sup>4</sup> For instance in *P.Herm.Rees* 45.1; cf. G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, s.v., and H. Zilliaceus, *Untersuchungen zu den abstrakten Anredeformen und Höflichkeitstiteln im Griechischen* (Helsinki 1949) 47.

<sup>5</sup> *P.Iand.* II 11.10; *PSI VIII* 895; *P.Oxy.* VI 903.37; *P.Strassb.* I 35.14; *BGU IV* 1035.12; *SB I* 4323.8; *P.Oxy.* VIII 1165.8; similar expressions like *μαρτυρεῖ μοι ὁ θεός* and the like are listed by L. Eisner on *P.Iand.* 11.10. See H. I. Bell, *HTR* 37 (1944) 197, and M. Naldini, *Il cristianesimo in Egitto* (Firenze 1968) 14.

something like τῶ[ν ὑπ(ο)μνημάτων], abbreviated  $\frac{Y}{\Pi}$  εἰς Δημοσθένην τὸν ῥήτορ[α τὸ α' (*exempli gratia*), although the blank space after τω would be against it. Other possibilities involve emendations of τω, e.g. τὸ [ὑπ(ό)μνημα] εἰς Δ., or τοῦ [κοφ(ι)στοῦ] εἰς Δ.<sup>6</sup> The gap at the end of this line, after ρητορ[, may have contained 5–6 letters.

11. There is a blank space before *Μενάνδρου*.

That the addressee of this letter, Theognostus, was an orator and a lawyer is indicated by the formula ἡ σὴ λογιότης in line 4 which alludes to Theognostus' erudition. It is obvious that the writer, Victor, is of the same profession. He had lent some books to his friend and colleague who had stayed with him at Hermupolis, possibly on his way down to Alexandria. But now Victor himself needs these books very urgently (lines 8–9), so he reminds<sup>7</sup> Theognostus to send them back through Elias the schoolmaster's slave. At first he seems to have thought of only one book (τὸ βιβλίον, line 6), namely the commentary (ὑπόμνημα?, see on line 10) on Demosthenes by Alexander Claudius.

This author is clearly to be identified with the sophist Alexander also called Claudius mentioned in the *Suda* (A 1128) where he is distinguished from the 'sophist' Alexander son of Numenius.<sup>8</sup> We now learn that this Alexander wrote a book on Demosthenes which was still found useful, evidently for practical purposes, by lawyers in fifth-century Egypt. Now, the scholia on Demosthenes<sup>9</sup> mention a commentator Alexander whom Dindorf<sup>10</sup> identified with Alexander, Numenius' son, also listed in the *Suda*.<sup>11</sup> Although it is of course theoretically possible that this identification is correct, the new papy-

<sup>6</sup> For the spelling mistake ω instead of ο or ου, see S. Kapsomenakis, *Voruntersuchungen zu einer Grammatik der Papyri der nachchristlichen Zeit* (MünchBeitr 28, 1938) 117.

<sup>7</sup> In the address on the *verso*, he calls his letter a 'reminder' or *commonitorium* (ὑπομνηστικόν); for the meaning, cf. *P.Med.* 87.3; *P.Vindob. Worp* 23.3; *P.Gen.* 79.1; *P.Fouad* 74.1; *P.Ant.* II 92.1. The Latin equivalent *commonitorium* is used by Symmachus (e.g. *Ep.* 5.21) and other authors of this period in exactly the same way; see S. Prete, "Il commonitorium nella letteratura cristiana antica," *Studi e ricerche* 6 (Bologna 1962) 8–9 and the passages quoted there.

<sup>8</sup> *Suda* A 1128 ed. Adler: . . . ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἕτερος Ἀλέξανδρος Ἀφροδισιεύς, φιλόσοφος· καὶ ἄλλος ὁ Νουμηίου, σοφιστής· καὶ ἄλλος, Κλαύδιος χρηματίας, σοφιστής.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. schol. ad 10.131.1 p.191.8 Dindorf (on *Κατὰ Φιλίππου* δ'): φασι δὲ οἱ αὐτοί, Ἀλέξανδρος καὶ Διόσκορος καὶ Ζήνων ὁ πολυθρύλητος . . ., and 20.462.13 p.468.10 Dindorf Ἀλέξανδρος μὲν ἐξηγούμενός φησιν ὅτι ἔδει κτλ.

<sup>10</sup> *Demosthenis opera* ed. G. Dindorf, VIII (Oxford 1850) xviii.

<sup>11</sup> See *supra* n.8.

rus makes it virtually certain that the commentator quoted by the scholia on Demosthenes is Alexander Claudius and not Alexander, Numenius' son.

This is obviously the book which Victor needs most urgently. Having asked Theognostus to send it back, he remembers that besides this one he had lent his colleague several other books as well and adds the titles of these in the last line of the recto, which is crammed into the narrow lower margin, and a kind of postscript in a corner of the back side. These other books are apparently all by Menander—no doubt the well-known rhetor from Laodiceia in Phrygia, near modern Denizli, who lived in the second half of the third century—namely the 'Art' (*Τέχνη*), the 'Methods' (*Μέθοδοι*), and the 'Eulogies' (*Ἐγκώμια*).

This is a valuable new piece of information because hitherto we knew very little about Menander's writings. Only two of his rhetorical treatises have survived, both of them dealing with 'speeches for display' (*Ἐπιδεικτικοὶ λόγοι*). The first is cited as *Μενάνδρου ῥήτορος γενεθλίων (πρὸς Γενέθλιον?) Διαίρεσις τῶν ἐπιδεικτικῶν*,<sup>12</sup> the second as *Μενάνδρου ῥήτορος Περὶ ἐπιδεικτικῶν* and also as *Περὶ τέχνης ῥητορικῆς*.<sup>13</sup> We may therefore assume that Menander's *Τέχνη* which Theognostus had borrowed from Victor was in fact this second treatise *Περὶ ἐπιδεικτικῶν*.

As for the other two titles, we are in a more difficult position. As they are mentioned separately in the postscript on the verso we must assume that they refer to writings not contained in the *Τέχνη*. The first one (*Μέθοδοι*) recalls the title of the then most famous treatise on the subject, Hermogenes' *Περὶ μεθόδου δεινότητος*.<sup>14</sup> Now, Menander himself in his *Διαίρεσις τῶν ἐπιδεικτικῶν* refers to a *βιβλίον* in which he wanted to set out theoretically the 'method' which he had

<sup>12</sup> *Rhetores graeci* ed. L. Spengel, III (Leipzig 1856) 331–67; an improved text was edited by C. Bursian, "Der Rhetor Menandros und seine Schriften," *AbhMünchen* 16.3 (1882), on which W. Kroll suggested further emendations in *RhM* 66 (1911) 169–74. On Menander, see L. Radermacher, *RE* 15 (1931) 762–64 s.v. MENANDROS 16; T. C. Burgess, "Epidictic Literature," *University of Chicago Studies in Classical Philology* 3 (1902) 89–261, especially 107 n.1 and 109–113 on *Περὶ ἐπιδεικτικῶν*.

<sup>13</sup> *Rhetores graeci* ed. Spengel III 368ff, referred to by the Anonymus *Περὶ τοῦ τελείου λόγου* (*Rhetores graeci* III 572.22–24 Walz): *περὶ λαλιᾶς δὲ καὶ τῶν τοιούτων μάθης πλατύτερον ἐν τοῖς τοῦ Μενάνδρου, ἃ ἐπιγράφονται Μενάνδρου ῥήτορος περὶ τέχνης ῥητορικῆς*.

<sup>14</sup> Hermogenes ed. Rabe (Leipzig 1913) pp.414ff. The plural *μέθοδοι* as a title is curious but not unparalleled; see e.g. Aristides' *Τέχνηαι ῥητορικαί*.

adopted in composing his hymn to Apollo,<sup>15</sup> and we may now infer from Victor's letter that Menander did in fact write such a book, probably not only on how to compose ὕμνοι κλητικοί but other kinds of hymns and speeches as well, and hence known as Μέθοδοι.

The title Ἐγκώμια, on the other hand, suggests at first sight not a rhetorical treatise περὶ ἐγκωμίων like the first chapter of Menander's Τέχνη or Περὶ ἐπιδεικτικῶν, which deals with the ἐγκώμιον βασιλέως,<sup>16</sup> but a collection of laudatory speeches. If we accept this hypothesis it would mean that the rhetor Menander was famous not only for his theoretical treatises (which does not surprise us) but also for his laudatory speeches (of which so far we had heard nothing), so famous indeed that they still served as models in Byzantine Egypt two centuries later! This seems unlikely when one considers that from Cicero's time onwards the only orator who became more and more canonical as a model was Demosthenes, a development which culminated in Hermogenes' evaluation of Demosthenes as ὁ ῥήτωρ.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, I would not rule out the possibility that the title Ἐγκώμια does after all refer to a treatise Περὶ ἐγκωμίων rather than to actual ἐγκώμια, although the form of the title would seem to suggest the latter. In the absence of further evidence, however, it seems unwise to settle on either of these conclusions.

Having discussed what kind of books Theognostus had borrowed from Victor, we may perhaps ask one final question: why did Victor want them back so urgently? He was obviously under pressure and in a hurry to write a speech, and for this purpose a commentary on Demosthenes would have been useful to him in any case, no matter what sort of a speech he was about to write. But with Menander's writings, which he asks for with equal urgency, it is a different matter: all three of them refer to λόγοι ἐπιδεικτικοί, not δικανικοί, so that we

<sup>15</sup> *Rhetores graeci* III 335.23 Spengel: οὐ χεῖρον δ' ἴσως καὶ τὴν μέθοδον, ἣ κεκρήμεθα ἡμεῖς ἐν τῷ κλητικῷ τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος ὕμνῳ, βιβλίῳ πως θέσθαι.

<sup>16</sup> *Rhetores graeci* III 368–77 Spengel; see L. Previale, "Teoria e prassi del panegirico bizantino," *Emerita* 17 (1949) 72–105 (esp. 80–83) and *Emerita* 18 (1950) 340–66; Burgess, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.12) 113ff and the passages quoted in 113 n.3.

<sup>17</sup> Hermogenes, *Περὶ ἰδεῶν* p.215.19ff Rabe; p.217.12ff τὰ γάρτοι τοῦ Δημοσθενικοῦ λόγου καθάπερ εἰ στοιχεῖα καὶ ἀρχαὶ εἰ δυνθεῖν ἀκριβῶς αὐτὰ ἕκαστα ἐφ' ἑαυτῶν πόσα τέ ἐστι δεῖξαι καὶ ὅποια καὶ ὅπως γίνονται τίς τε ἢ πρὸς ἄλληλα μῖζις αὐτῶν καὶ τί δύνανται τόνδε ἢ τόνδε μιν γινόμενα τὸν τρόπον, τάχα ἂν περὶ ἀπάντων τῶν λόγων εἰρηκότερος εἴημεν. p. 279.22 τότε μᾶλλον θαυμαστός ὁ λόγος γίνεται, ὅταν διὰ τῶν ἐναντίων ἰδεῶν εὖ κεκραμένος περαίνηται. δυσχερὴς δὲ ἢ μῖζις, καὶ σχεδὸν οὐδεὶς οὕτω καλῶς οὐδὲ τῶν ἀρχαίων αὐτῇ κέχρηται ὡς ὁ ῥήτωρ, μετὰ γε Ὀμηρον. Cf. *Περὶ μεθόδου δεινότητος* 33–34 pp.450–52 Rabe.

*P. Berol.* 21849, recto: LETTER OF VICTOR TO THEOGNOSTUS  
(Hermupolis, V cent.)

*P. Berol.* 21849, verso: END OF LETTER AND ADDRESS

may suppose that Victor's aim was not to defend someone in court but to write a laudatory speech on some illustrious person, perhaps a prominent visitor to Hermupolis whose visit had been announced at short notice—but this is, of course, only a guess.

AEGYPTISCHES MUSEUM, WEST BERLIN

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