

W. B. HENRY

A PAPYRUS OF OLD COMEDY (P. OXY. 863 + 2806)

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## A PAPYRUS OF OLD COMEDY (P. OXY. 863 + 2806)

P. Oxy. VI 863 was ascribed by O. Schroeder to the *Demes* of Eupolis,<sup>1</sup> and his attribution has been generally accepted; the fragment appears in *Poetae Comici Graeci* as Eupolis fr. \*101.<sup>2</sup> I. C. Storey, however, urged caution:<sup>3</sup> ‘The remains are not enough to make confident assertions about the source, although *Demoi* must rank on the short list, or about the context or speaker(s).’ There is in fact good reason to doubt the attribution, for P. Oxy. 863 turns out to be in the same hand as P. Oxy. XXXVII 2806 (Com. adesp. 1109).<sup>4</sup> Now two papyri in the same hand found at the same site may not belong to a single roll,<sup>5</sup> but that is the natural assumption in this case, especially since no other examples of this scribe’s work are known to have survived.<sup>6</sup> The attribution of P. Oxy. 2806 is itself in doubt, but it can hardly have belonged to the *Demes*, for, as R. Kassel observes, the speaker of Com. adesp. 1109.5–11 ‘muß wohl ein göttliches oder göttergleiches Wesen sein’,<sup>7</sup> and the *Demes* appears to offer no plausible candidates. E. W. Handley argued that the piece is to be assigned to the *Dionysalexander* of Cratinus,<sup>8</sup> but his arguments are not decisive;<sup>9</sup> and while P. Oxy. 863 itself has also been ascribed to the *Dionysalexander*,<sup>10</sup> much of the detail of the fragment is hard to reconcile with what is known of that play,<sup>11</sup> about which we are more than usually well informed. Until new evidence emerges, it may be safest to consider the papyrus an *adespoton*, perhaps the work of Cratinus, if Lobel’s argument from the use of the verb *μετεκβάλλω*<sup>12</sup> can be accorded any weight.

W. B. Henry, Department of Greek and Latin, University College London, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT, United Kingdom

[w\\_b\\_henry@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:w_b_henry@yahoo.co.uk)

<sup>1</sup> *Novae comoediae fragmenta* ... (1915) 65–6.

<sup>2</sup> Kassel and Austin’s numeration is taken over by I. C. Storey in his *Loeb Fragments of Old Comedy* (2011), where this fragment is edited and translated at II 114–15.

<sup>3</sup> *Eupolis: Poet of Old Comedy* (2003) 171. In his Loeb edition (n. 2), he does not mention his doubts, but states that the fragment was ‘plausibly attributed to *Demes*’.

<sup>4</sup> P. Oxy. 863 is reproduced in *Mnem.* 8 (1940) Pl. IIIb (after p. 16), and P. Oxy. 2806 together with the first edition (Pl. II). Dr N. Gonis kindly informs me that he agrees with the identification.

<sup>5</sup> For example, the hand of P. Oxy. LXI 4107 (Thucydides VII) has recently turned up in a copy of Demosthenes XXX, P. Oxy. LXXVIII 5151. For a list (limited to the Egyptian material) of cases in which the same hand has been recognized in the remains of more than one roll, see W. A. Johnson, *Bookrolls and Scribes in Oxyrhynchus* (2004) 61–5.

<sup>6</sup> Johnson (n. 5) 64 incorrectly reports that the hand of P. Oxy. 2806 was ‘hesitantly’ identified by H. Harrauer, *Mnem.* 31 (1978) 356, with that of a copy of Xenophon, *Hellenica* I, P. Vindob. G 24568 + 257 + 29781 (MP<sup>3</sup> 1552). Harrauer makes no such proposal, and the hands are easily distinguishable, even in small quantities. The hand of the Isocrates papyrus P. Vindob. G 26005 (MP<sup>3</sup> 1270), concerning which Harrauer writes that ‘man beinahe versucht ist, an denselben Schreiber bzw. dieselbe Schreibertradition zu denken’ (as in the case of P. Oxy. 2806), is indeed of the same general type, but again clearly distinct on a closer inspection. For further parallels to the hand of P. Vindob. G 26005, see G. Messeri Savorelli and M. Fassino in *CPF* I.2\*\*, p. 871.

<sup>7</sup> *ZPE* 35 (1979) 5 = *Kleine Schriften* (1991) 78. Cf. Storey (n. 2) III 409: ‘the speaker should be a divine being or hero’.

<sup>8</sup> *BICS* 29 (1982) 109–117.

<sup>9</sup> See e.g. W. Luppe, *ZPE* 72 (1988) 37–8; C. Austin, *QUCC* 63 (1999) 39–40. The significance of the sequence *πῶν ποτῆ* in line 8 of the papyrus hypothesis to the *Dionysalexander* (test. i in *PCG* IV 140–41, from P. Oxy. IV 663; Storey (n. 2) I 286–91), which Handley (understanding *π(ε)ρὶ ὑῶν ποιή(σε)ως*, ‘about the getting of sons’) connected with the miraculous offspring of Com. adesp. 1109.5–11, continues to be debated: see e.g. E. Bakola, *Cratinus and the Art of Comedy* (2010) 297–304, for a recent treatment. Handley (n. 8) 114 states that ‘the handwriting of the title of 663 (as Sir Eric Turner confirms), though larger than that of the text of 2806, is entirely consistent with it’, but when so little survives, not much weight can be placed on this point, as Handley concedes (‘we are dealing with probabilities not proof’).

<sup>10</sup> By M. Wright, *CQ* 56 (2006) 593–5.

<sup>11</sup> See W. Luppe, *ZPE* 160 (2007) 24; M. Telò (ed.), *Eupolidis Demi* (2007) 657–8.

<sup>12</sup> ‘The only clue is that *μετεκβάλλειν* occurs nowhere in Greek but here, but that Cratinus [fr. 474] used the derived noun [i.e. *μετεκβολή*]’ (P. Oxy. XXXVII, p. 18); cf. Handley (n. 8) 109.