P.Duk.inv. 230, an Erotic Spell

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AMONG THE ANCIENT GREEK TEXTS from Egypt housed in the Special Collections Department of the Perkins Library of Duke University is an unpublished erotic spell, which I present here. It is inscribed on a lead tablet and is meant to bring a woman to a man.

From antiquity we have, on papyrus, pottery, gemstones, and thin tablets of lead, some forty other inscribed “working” erotic


spells in Greek or Latin, as well as dozens of recipes for such in Greek papyrus formularies, each intended to make its victim lust after the would-be beneficiary for whom it was written. Like all ancient magic, they are the means to an end; when this last is made explicit in the extant erotic spells, it is usually, perhaps contra expectationem, not the sexual gratification of the beneficiary but something else. "Make Aplonous love me," we read on a lead tablet from Roman Egypt (Suppl. Mag. 39), "... so that ... she’ll give me whatever I say." Another (42): "Drive Gorgonia ..., drive, torment her body night and day, force her to rush forth from any place and any house, loving Sophia, she, surrendered like a slave, giving herself and all her possessions to her." In another (54), with the phrase "melt his flesh, his sinews, limbs, soul, so that he cannot be an opponent of (ἀντίς ἐλθεῖν) Ionikos or see or hear anything bad against me (i.e. Ionikos)," the intended victim is presumably a magistrate of some kind or a potential litigant whose good opinion Ionikos needs; to that end Ionikos attempts to attract his sexual desire: "take control of (or: bewitch) the φιλία of Annianos for Ionikos by means of ἔρως, στοργή, indissoluble [e.g. ἄγαπη]." So too in the papyrus formularies, e.g. PGM IV 1806–1810 "turn her soul to me, so


3 Winkler (1990: 91–93, 1991: 228–230) apparently fails to notice this when depicting the "typical" user of these spells as the lover in his tortured sexual longing.

that she will love me (φιλή), desire me (ἐρέξ), give me what she has in her hands."^5

A few erotic spells that are inscribed for men specify that sexual intercourse is what the women who are their targets shall desire (e.g. PGM XIXa, Suppl. Mag. 38, 45, Brashear 1992). Intercourse with the woman is presumably envisaged in all these erotic spells to benefit men, but only three mention sexual desire on the part of the man himself.^6 Of one, PGM XVIIa, the motivation is also economic gain: "Drive (her) to me ... until ... she comes desiring me, her hands full, with generous soul ..., performing those things that befit women with men, and serving my desire (ἐπιθυμία) and hers unstintingly and ungrudgingly" (16–22). The others, XIc with its "make me, so-and-so, attain intercourse" (7–9) and the spell presented here, are rare in that their motivation is explicitly and apparently primarily male sexual gratification.

The tablet, its letter-forms suggesting IVP, is almost wholly intact, with only a few areas missing from the left- and right-hand sides. In its upper central part is a simple drawing of Seth-Typhon with his head that of an ass but with otherwise more or less human features.^7 He is wearing a tunic—we see its

^5Presumably this is the import also of PGM VII 909–910 ἐγὼ ἐλθοῦσα (for ἔλθῃ) πρὸς ἐμέ ... πληροφορῶσα, "until she comes to me ... paying up in full" vel sim., but the last word in the Greek is attested in less specific senses.

^6The restorations of ἀγε [μοι καὶ κατάδησον τὴν δεῖν, ἕν δείνα, [εἰς] τὸν ἐπὶ ἐρέσι αὐτῆς τηκόμενον at PGM VII 985–986, in instructions for an ἀγάμμον, may be doubted. In addition, I know of no ancient erotic spell that alludes to sexual desire on the part of a female beneficiary. A recipe in the Demotic part of the bilingual formulary PGM LXI (IIIp) is no exception. The translation of J. H. Johnson (GMPT 289) runs: "Spell of giving praise [and] love in Nubian: 'ΣΥΜΘΥΣ ΚΕΣΥΘ ΗΡΒΑΒΑ ΒΡΑΣΑΚΗΣ ΛΑΤ, son of (?) NAPH, son of (?) BAKHA.' Say these; put gum on your hand; and kiss your shoulder twice, and go before the man whom you desire." Prof. Johnson tells me (per epistl.) that the Demotic for "whom you desire" is no more than "whom you seek" and has no sexual connotations. She also writes that the "you" of the spell is masculine. If it had been feminine, the beneficiary would necessarily have been a woman, but that it is masculine leaves his or her gender ambiguous. So too with the word translated here as "the man."

^7For references to representations of Seth-Typhon as ass-head see Moraux 1960: 19–22, esp. 19 n.3.
fringe in the area of his thighs—and is holding in his proper right hand a whip (?) and in his left a staff (?). Above the latter are two squarish drawings possibly of beribboned flags or plaques. At his proper right are traces of (A) three columns of magical words, and to the right of his staff are traces of (B) a fourth and (C) a fifth. Beneath his feet is (D) a stylized drawing of a tabula ansata inscribed with a series of vowels (imperfect). The main text (E) of the spell itself occupies an area at the right of and beneath the drawings. This general arrangement, a figure flanked by letters in columns, is prescribed, at the beginning of the large scroll of formulae at Oslo (P.Oslo I 1 = PGM XXXVI: IVp), in four recipes for writing spells. The figure in the third is a chicken-headed anthropoid with an up-raised whip in his proper right hand and a small human dangling from his left. There are two columns of letters on each side of the anthropoid, the outer reading Ιωερβηθ Ιωπακερβηθ Ιωβαλχοσηθ Ιωαπομυ, the inner Σηθ Σηθ Σηθ Σηθ Βακ Βακ Βακ; beneath his feet is a plaque with the vocable Αβερρομενθο. The text that accompanies the figure is an erotic spell (ἀγωγή):

77 ἔλθε, Τυφών ὁ ἐπὶ τὴν ύπτιαν πῦλην καθήμενος,
78 ἰωερβηθ ἰωπακερβηθ ἰωβαλχοσηθ ἰωαπομυ
79 ἰωσεσενρω ἰοβιματ ἱακουμβαια ἀβερρομενθω
80 ουλερθεξί ἄναξ έθρελουωθ Μεμαρεβα τοῦ Σηθ. ὃς ὑ-
81 μεῖς καίεσθε καὶ πυροῦσθε, οὕτως καὶ ἡ ψυχή, ἡ καρδία
82 τῆς δεῖνα, ἡς ἔτεκεν ἡ δείνα, ἔως ἃν ἐλθῇ πιλούσα ἐμὲ τὸν δείνα
83 καὶ τὴν θηλυκὴν αὐτῆς φύσιν τῇ ἀρσενικῇ μου κολλήσῃ.
84 Ἄνεθ ἦδη, ταχὺ ταχὺ.

Come, Typhon sitting at the upper gate, ΙΩΕΡΒΗΘ ΙΟΠΑΚΕΡΒΗΘ ΙΟΑΡΟΜΠΗΣ ΙΟΣΕΣΕΝΡΩ ΙΟΒΙΜΑΤ ΙΑΚΟΥΜΒΑΙΑ ΑΒΕΡΡΑΜΕΝΘΟ ΟΥΛΕΡ-
THEX, lord ΕΘΡΕΛΥΟΟΣ ΜΕΜΑΡΕΒΑ of Seth: as you burn and are in flames, so too the soul, the heart of so-and-so, whom so-and-so bore, until she comes loving me, so-and-so, and glues her female organ to my male. At once, at once, quickly, quickly! (transl. Eitrem)
The Ἰὸερβῆθ logos and other phrases figure in the Duke spell, which must, as careless mistakes show, have been copied from a formulary, no doubt from one like that at Oslo. In the translation below, I print its only personalized parts, the proper names, in italics.

P. Duk. inv. 230 H. 0.104, W. 0.075 m. IVp

A. At the left of the figure, in columns:
1 [ca.4] λλοθυο([\textit{max. ca. 4}]
2 ημαξι[?]? ρ\textit{[ca.2]}ουμι[\textit{max. ca. 4}]
3 [?]\alpha\theta\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\thetaυ\mu\omega\nu\nu\epsilon\mu\rho

B. At the right of his staff, in a column:
4 ια\omega[\textit{ca.3}] ησι[\textit{max.2}]

C. In a column farther to the right:
5 ιω ιω α[\textit{max.3-4}]. . . [?] 

D. Within the tabula ansata:
6 αε\nu\sigmaουνη\nu\nu\nu\nu

E. At the right of and beneath the designs:
7 'Εξορκίζω σαι,
8 δαίμων, κατα
9 τοῦ μεγάλου
10 θεοῦ Ερηκιση-
11 φθη Αραρα-
12 (Drawing) χαραρα Ηι-

8 Eitrem on P. Oslo I 1 (p.31): "It was said to have come originally from Batn-Harit [in the Fayum]. We may raise the question whether there was here, or in some neighbouring town, a 'factory' for producing such magical papyri." Of this type there was at least one other formulary, represented by PGM LVIII, a fragmentary leaf from a fourth-century codex with magical recipes, its hand very like—to my eye perhaps identical to—that of the Oslo scroll. One side of the leaf preserves part of a drawing, evidently as crudely done as those at Oslo, of some shaggy creature (J. Schawe, Die Universitätsbibliothek Gießen. Eine kleine Führung [Giessen 1962-63] 20). The other side has instructions for inscribing a lead curse tablet. The text of DT: Aud 188 (vidi) in fact follows that of a similar recipe, which probably, like several in the Oslo scroll, originally included drawings of the magical cha\tuple{raktères}, for such cover the back of the extant tablet.
P.Duk.inv. 230, AN EROTIC SPELL

D. R. J.

.00 .01 .02 .03 .04 .05 m.

P.Duk.inv. 230, IVp  H. 0.104, W. 0.075 m.
E: I adjure you, ghost, by the great god ERKISEPHTHE A RARACHARARA ἙΡΗΘΕΣΙΚΕΡΕ [?]PHERSΟΓΕΙ[?]. In IOE IOERBETH IOPAKERBETH IOBOLOCHSOTH IØPSENCHAN BAINCHΟÇH: Kleopatran, daughter(?) of Patrakinos (?), drive Tereous, whom Apia bore, to me, Didymos, whom Taipiam bore, burning, inflamed, wracked in her soul, her mind, her female parts, until she comes to me, Didymos, whom Tepiam bore, and glues her lips to my lips, hair to my hair, belly to my belly, wee black to my wee black, until I accomplish my intercourse and my male nature with her female nature. At once, quickly (twice).
1–5. These lines, inscribed more shallowly than the rest of the text, have been difficult to read. I have not succeeded in identifying here any usual logos such as those beside the figures in the Oslo scroll. In line 4 we have Iao (Yahweh), with whom the ass-headed Seth-Typhon was sometimes associated (Moraux 1960: 26–27), followed in line 5 by the Coptic for “ass,” ω, a vocable common in magical texts (Brashear 1995: 3588).

6. Strings of vowels were common in Graeco-Egyptian magic, the indices in the unpublished third volume of PGM including over forty examples (for bibliography see D. E. Aune, “Iao,” RLAC 17 [1996] 1–12, at 7). Here, after αεικovies, something seems to have gone wrong with the order.

7. The text proper opens with an adjuration of a δαιμων, the word here no doubt with the sense νεκυδαιμων, the ghost, dead before his or her time, into or near whose grave or sarcophagus the lead tablet would have been placed: see Preisendanz 1935 and, for further bibliography, Brashear 1995: 3468 n.429.

11–14. The palindrome Ἐπίκτητος Ἀραράχαρα Ἡφθοσικής (here imperfect: Ἐπίκτητος Ἁφθοσικής[ε]) is frequent in magical texts in Roman imperial times, the indices of PGM, DTAud, and Suppl. Mag. revealing 19 examples. Usually the texts in which it occurs have a Jewish flavor, invoking e.g. archangels (PGM IV 1797) or the θεόν τὸν Ἰσραήλ (for Ἰσραήλ), who is also called τὸν θεον τοῦ Ἀβρααμ καὶ τὸν Ἰαω (for τοὺς Ἰσαακ καὶ τοὺς Λοκου (DTAud 271, Hadrumetum), but its second and third elements occur, rather forcibly fitted, in hexametric hymns to Apollon-Helios at PGM II 100 (χαῖρε, πυρὸς μεδέων αραράχαρα ηφθοσικής) and Hekate-Selene-Artemis at IV 2849 (σὺ δὲ χάους μεδέων αραράχαρα ηφθοσικής). E. Rohde (Psyche9 II [Berlin 1925] 81 n.2) and independently R. Merkelbach (“Φθοσικής,” ZPE 47 [1982] 172), both articulating ἦ φθο., have interpreted φθοσικής as Greek (Merkelbach: “Vernichter des Todesloses”), but K. Preisendanz has argued (“Palindrom,” RE 18 [1949] 133–139, at 135) that
the epithet would be inappropriate in at least the first of the two hymns cited here. S. Eitrem (P.Oslo I p.94) considered that the phrase in the second must have been interpreted as “destroying death.” See Preisendanz’s basic treatment of the vocable (esp. 135–136), in which he summarizes and assesses speculations as to its sense.

14–19. [?]φερσογε[?]'ν (σ or ε) is apparently new, as is ἰωψενχαν (χ corr. from θ). Ἰαν is common, especially in magical expressions with clusters of vowels, e.g. PGM IV 1564–1565 Ἰαω ιαν ιωα αι ὧν. For discussion of the Ἰδερβῆθ logos (here Ἰωερβῆθ ... Ἰοβολχοσηθ, though usually with more elements, as at P.Oslo I 1.78–79), characteristically associated with Seth-Typhon, see Moraux 1960: 19–39. Καϊγχωωξ is a scribal error for Βαϊγχωωξ, Egyptian b3 n kkw “spirit of darkness” (Bra­shear 1995: 3581), and is not part of the logos.

19. After Καϊγχωωξ we have a Greek female name and patronymic, Κλωπάτριν Πατρακίνον. The first has as its initial element Κλεο- with the shift [eo] → [o] as in Θοδότη (Lefebvre, Rec. inscr. gr.-chrét. d’Égypte 795), Λωνίδης (MAMA VII 982), etc., and no doubt Κλοπᾶς (Jn. 19:25, pace W. Bauer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, s.v., who assumes this last to be Semitic); its second is a syncopation of -πάτριον. The canonical spelling would be Κλεοπάτριον, the vocative of either the masculine Κλεοπατρίων (attested once: O.Wilck. 1434, ΠΠ) or the feminine diminutive, here new. Unless the patronymic as spelled here is a deformation of a name like Πατρικιανός, it is apparently new (Πατρακίνος? Πατράκινος?).

Kleopatrin is the ghost addressed in lines 7–8. Although in magical addresses to the dead these last usually go unnamed (e.g. Suppl.Mag. 48 J-K 20 νεκυδαίμων, ὡστις ποτ’ ἵ, εἶτε ἄρρης εἶτε θῆλια), we do have erotic spells that name them: those from Egypt roughly contemporary with the Duke tablet are PGM XXXII and Suppl.Mag. 37, 47; cf. the recipe at PGM IV 2180–2181, where the nekydaimon is addressed as ὁ δεῖνα, the name
to be supplied. (See Preisendanz 1935: 2249 for ghosts named on earlier Attic lead curse tablets.) With one other exception, ὅριὸν Ἀρατοῦτος at Suppl. Mag. 37.1, their identifications as preserved are simple personal names without lineage. F. Boll, the initial editor of this last text, assumed that the scribe knew the young Horion before the latter died.²⁹ That scribe and ours may, though, have merely read the burial markers, which would have recorded at least name, patronymic, and age at death. If the name Kleopatrion is in fact feminine, we have our first instance of a female ghost named in a Greek magical text.

20. τε is superfluous. No doubt the scribe began to write Τηρηνος and then, having decided that he should have used the Greek article (rather than its Coptic equivalent, τε), inserted τὴν without deleting τε. Articles are in fact seldom used before the names of the intended victims and beneficiaries of magical spells (of the forty or so other “working” Greek erotic spells [supra n.2], for example, only ten have articles in this position) and never before the mother’s name in the formula for maternal lineage. Like ours, one other spell (lead tablet, unpublished) gives the article before the victim’s name but not before the beneficiary’s. As for the woman’s name itself, Τηρηνος is attested elsewhere at least once, at P.Lond. V 1652.8 (IVp), where it has the genitive Τη ῥηνοτος. The accusative would be Τη ῥηνοτα or Τηρεων.

Maternal lineage, as here, is found in Greek magic from the early centuries of our era, although there are Egyptian antecedents from the Middle Kingdom.³⁰ In Greek formularies the phrase was often abbreviated to ἄδιν/�新 ἄ, ἄνδ, or even ἄ.

²⁹ Ein griechischer Liebeszauber aus Ägypten (SBHeid 1910.2).
Evidently our scribe had one of these shorter abbreviations in the model for lines 20, 21, and 24, for in resolving it he has introduced his own spelling into 21, ὅν for ὅν (cf. his Δίδυμον for -μον), and has neglected to include the phrase linking the two names in 24.

21. Τατταλία here and Τετταλί in line 24 are variant spellings of a female name that occurs elsewhere as Τατταλιός, Ταττωμίς, Ταττιάμις, and Ταττεμίς (see Namenbuch s.vv.).

22–23. If the first word at PGM XIXa 50, [καὶ]ομένην, πυρομένην, κέντει (βασανιζομένην, may be restored as [φλεγ]ομένην, the three participles on the lead tablet occur there too. The omission in φλεγομένην(ν) is no doubt scribal rather than phonetic, i.e. φλεγομένην → φλεγομένη (cf. βασανιζομένη following, συνουσία in line 28) → φλεγομένη.

25–28. The gluing or fastening together of bodily parts finds parallels in other “working” erotic spells on papyrus (XVIIa 22–23, thighs, bellies, “blacks”; P.Monac. inv. AS 6972.50–51 [Brashear 1992], thighs, lips) and lead (Suppl.Mag. 38.12, thighs, φύσεις) and in recipes for them (PGM IV 400–404, heads, lips, bellies, thighs, “blacks”; XXXVI 83, 113–114, 150, female φύσις to male; Suppl.Mag. 78 II 7–8, thighs? “blacks”?).

28. As far as I know, μέλανος has the sense “pubic area” only in the passages cited above. μελάνιον here is the first example of its diminutive.

29. φύσις in the passages cited in the note on line 25 (see Winkler 1990: 217–220 for other examples) means “sexual organ.” If τελέσω is to govern both συνοισία(ν) and φύσιν, however, the latter here probably has its abstract sense.

30. i.e. ἤδη ἤδη, τοχυ τοχύ, as in the Oslo text quoted above and as often found at the ends of spells. The ἤδη τοχύ β' of the lead tablet is an unresolved abbreviation from the scribe’s for-
mulary: cf. e.g. PGM XII 143, 396 ἑδη β’, ταχυ β’. For these and other abbreviations of the phrase in formularies see my “Notes from Carthage,” ZPE 111 (1996) 115-123, at 119.

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Athens