

The Myth of the Vaginal Soul

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IN 1920 THE INAUGURAL VOLUME of *Byzantinisch-neugriechische Jahrbücher* included a brief note that offered a magical explanation for the “high water mark” of patristic antipathy toward the oracle of Apollo at Delphi.¹ At issue was the Christian charge (first attested in Origen) that the Pythia was inspired, quite literally, when the spirit of Apollo passed into her body by means of her genitals.² In the absence of any classical precedent for this surprising allegation, Ryszard Ganszyniec suggested that its origins lay rather in a fundamental misunderstanding of the word ψυχή: it must have had a hitherto unrecognized “popular” meaning, namely, “the genitals, especially the pudenda of a woman.” Moving quickly from suggestions to confident conclusions, “Das Märchen der Pythia” asserted that ψυχή was in this respect analogous to the Greek φύσις (and Latin *natura*), whose semantic range certainly included both male and female genitals.³ The double entendre, then, had fused with ancient conceptions of oracular possession to produce a novel patristic “entrance” for the spirit of Apollo into the woman who gave him voice. Origen and other authors

¹Ryszard Ganszyniec, “Das Märchen der Pythia,” *Byzantinisch-neugriechische Jahrbücher* 1 (1920) 170–171. Abbreviations used here: *DT*: A. Audollent, *Defixionum tabellae* (Paris 1904); *GMPT*: Hans Dieter Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*² (Chicago 1992). Unless otherwise indicated, translations are my own, although *GMPT* has been helpful at many points.

²Origen *c. Cels.* 3.25, 7.3; Joh. Chrys. *Hom. in I Cor.* 29.1 is more explicit still.

³This sense of φύσις is attested in a host of examples; see the discussion by John J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (London 1990) 217–220. Cf. *LSJ s.v.*, esp. VII.2, and the revised supplement (1996) p.310.

thus transmitted a “dogmatized *Volksvorstellung*” of the mysterious process by which the Pythia was inspired.⁴

It was an innovative solution to a patristic puzzle. More importantly, as it turned out, Ganszyniec’s suggestion promised to shed new light on the “soul” itself, or at least on a number of curious instances of the word ψυχή in magical sources. Enigmatic instructions that seem to indicate a bodily location for the soul, for example, take on an altogether different (and satisfyingly concrete) meaning if ψυχή is interpreted as a euphemism for the genitals. Indeed, as Ganszyniec observed toward the end of his article, the implications of its argument extended well beyond the five examples cited there: amid the lively scholarly interest in magical texts, surely more examples might be found, and difficult passages explained, in the papyri and beyond.⁵ Some eight years later, the publication of *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, the long-awaited collaborative edition of magical papyri, substantially enlarged the argument’s audience along with its scope, citing Ganszyniec’s conclusions at several points and enlisting new texts for the cause.⁶ Subsequent decades and increasing interest in ancient magic have continued to expand the list.

Closer inspection of Ganszyniec’s examples, however, indicates that his new meaning for ψυχή must remain a tantalizing but unlikely suggestion. None of the texts adduced in “Das Märchen der Pythia” or in later studies requires an otherwise undocumented connotation of an important (and well-studied)

⁴Ganszyniec is vague about the specific process leading from his new meaning of ψυχή to Origen’s story. “Von hier bis zum Märchen der Pythia ist nur ein kleiner Schritt,” he writes, but nothing about the *Schritt* itself.

⁵Early Christian conceptions of inspiration by the Holy Spirit, for instance, might require revision, “especially where female prophets were concerned”; “Seit alter Zeit mochte für den Schoß der Euphemismus ψυχή im Volk gebraucht sein und der Doppelsinn dieses Wortes begünstigte die volkstümliche Interpretation, die sich wohl im Wortlaut, freilich nicht im Sinne, mit der Ansicht der Gelehrten vom ἐνθουσιασμός deckte, da auch diese sagten, daß der Geist Gottes in die ψυχή, in die Seele einkehre.”

⁶The first volume of *PGM* first appeared in 1928, the second in 1931. For research on ancient magic after the First World War, and the project that culminated in *PGM*, see the useful account by Betz in *GMPT* xliii–xliv.

word, as I argue below. But in its turn this demonstration appears to un-solve a number of philological problems, apart from the question of Origen and the Pythia. What do we make of ψυχή in cases where conventional definitions seem not to fit?

Thus, in the course of addressing important texts and examples adduced in favor of a slang meaning for ψυχή, the following discussion also investigates parallels and alternative explanations for the word's usage in Greek magic. Taken as a whole, these texts begin to suggest a number of additional insights about the "soul" itself. In the first place, regardless of any direct sexual meaning, the preponderant magical context in which ψυχή appears is decidedly, even aggressively, an erotic one. In part, this simply reflects the sheer volume of love spells preserved in the papyri, itself an indication of a fascination with "love magic" that permeates every era, and multiple genres, of Greek literature.⁷ But the magical link between *erôs* and *psychê*, though not so well-known as the mythical coupling of their divine personifications, remains close indeed. So close, in fact, that Ganszyniec's "popular" meaning of ψυχή has long remained a tempting suggestion. Once shorn of unlikely definitions, therefore, the soul and its magical context continue to demand further scrutiny.⁸

The first text in Ganszyniec's list is a spell from the Great Paris Papyrus:⁹

ἔλκε τὴν δεῖνα τῶν τριχῶν, τῶν σπλάγχνων, τῆς ψυχῆς πρὸς ἐμέ.
 Drag her by the hair, by the inward parts, by the *psychê*, to me.

⁷For "the ubiquity of love magic" in Greek literature, see Christopher A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1999) 5–15. For the lengthy list of papyri that may be categorized as "amatory magic," see the thorough summary by William M. Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey; Annotated Bibliography (1928–1994)," *ANRW II* 18.5 (1995) 3380–3684, at 3502.

⁸This is a subject I am currently pursuing as part of a larger project called "A Cultural History of the Soul in Late Antiquity."

⁹*PGM* 4.376–377. Although Ganszyniec obviously did not have access to *PGM* in 1920, I use the edition's text, numbering, and orthography here.

Beyond calling this command “unclear, hence without meaning,” Ganszyniec adds no further explanation. *PGM*’s note to line 377 is equally terse: “ $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ = $\phi\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\iota\varsigma$,” with a reference to Ganszyniec’s article; the translation renders $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ as *Natur*, whose semantic range neatly coincides in this case with the Greek $\phi\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\iota\varsigma$ and its Latin equivalent *natura*, all of which can refer to the genitals.¹⁰ Although several scholars have followed *PGM*’s equation, no subsequent study has tried to explain it.¹¹

Let us consider, therefore, the implicit argument equating $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ with $\phi\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\iota\varsigma$ in *PGM* 4.377. It seems to consist in the belief that a person dragged has to be dragged by *something* holding on *somewhere*, and that a physical part of the body is a more likely handle for dragging than abstractions like “soul.” Ganszyniec elsewhere stresses the body-part argument, although it is unclear why he prefers the genitals. But apart from this omission, does *PGM* 4.377 require a physical part of the body in the first place? On the contrary, the spell seems to progress in a deliberate intensification, moving from the concrete, external “hair” to the more general, possibly figurative “inward parts” before culminating in the soul itself. In this regard it is important to recall the full semantic range of $\tau\acute{\alpha}$ $\sigma\pi\lambda\acute{\alpha}\gamma\gamma\upsilon\alpha$, whose extended meanings include “seat of the affections” among other possibilities, a usage that stems from the bodily location whence passions and affections were felt to arise.¹² From here to the

¹⁰*PGM* I p.85. See *supra* n.3 for $\phi\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\iota\varsigma$. *Natur* for male or female genitals (an archaism even in its day) is an obsolete usage in German: see *Das große Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*³ VII (Mannheim 1999) 2707 s.v. “Natur” 6a; or the copious treatment in Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* VII (Leipzig 1889) 436 s.v. “Natur” II.AA.2.

¹¹See, for example, *GMPT* p.339, which identifies *PGM* 4.377 as one of a number of texts where “*psychê* means female pudendum.” David G. Martinez, *P.Michigan XVI: A Greek Love Charm from Egypt* (P. Mich. 799) (ASP 30 [Atlanta 1991]) 15, translates $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ as “vagina” in the present case, although he expresses reservations about Ganszyniec’s claims. Faraone (*supra* n.7) 53 n.59 leaves $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$ untranslated because of the “slang usage ‘female genitalia’ that occurs in magical love spells” (50 n.48).

¹²See the examples cited in LSJ s.v. II; and G. W. H. Lampe, ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford 1961) s.v. The definition “genitals” for $\tau\acute{\alpha}$ $\sigma\pi\lambda\acute{\alpha}\gamma\gamma\upsilon\alpha$, suggested by Bernadette J. Brooten, *Love Between Women: Early Christian Re-*

soul, which together with the “heart” itself represents the chief object of Greek love magic, is a dramatic but reasonable step—much more reasonable, surely, than an abrupt and unparalleled reference to dragging a woman by her vagina.

In fact, the fortuitous survival of a third- or fourth-century lead tablet from Oxyrhynchus confirms this interpretation of ψυχή at *PGM* 4.377. Following *PGM*’s formula closely, the tablet records the spell of a certain Theodore as he tries to ensnare “Matrona” (*Suppl.Mag.* 50.62–66):

ἔλκε τὴν Ματρῶναν τῶν τριχῶν, τῶν σπλά(γ)χνων, τῆς
 ψυχῆς, τῆς καρδίας, ἕως ἔλθῃ πρὸς Θεόδωρον.
 Drag Matrona by the hair, by the inward parts, by the *psychê*,
 by the heart, until she comes to Theodore.

Clearly καρδιά must be understood figuratively here, along with ψυχή. The progression from hair to heart, and thus the spell’s concern with dragging “body and soul” and everything in between, has become explicit.¹³

Ganszyniec’s second example raises still more interesting questions (*PGM* 7.411–415):

νυκτολάλημα. λαβὼν κοκκοφαδίου τὴν καρδίαν καὶ
 βάλῃ εἰς ζυμύρναν καὶ γράφῃ εἰς πιττάκιον ἱερατικὸν τὰ
 ὀνόματα καὶ τοὺς χαρακτήρας καὶ ἔλιξον τὴν καρδίαν
 εἰς τὸ πιττάκιον καὶ ἐπίθεῃ ἐπὶ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτῆς καὶ
 ἐπερώτα· καὶ πάντα σοι ἐξομολογήσει.
Sleep-talking. Take the heart of a *kokkophadion*¹⁴ and put it

sponses to Female Homoeroticism (Chicago 1996) 90, 103, apparently with respect to the the present text, is unlikely, since otherwise unknown as well as unnecessary here.

¹³An interesting parallel, possibly sketching an analogous progression from tangible to abstract, is *Suppl.Mag.* 40.15–17: πύρωσον τῆς αὐτῆς τὸ ἦπαρ καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὴν καρδίαν καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν. But for the same words in varying order, see the five instances of this formula in *Suppl.Mag.* 42 (lines 14–15, 35–36, 44–45, 54–55, 59–60). Cf. *Suppl.Mag.* 46.22–23 and 47.23 for more dragging by hair and inward parts.

¹⁴This bird(?) is otherwise unknown, although many scholars suspect a hoopoe (κουκούφας). See *PGM*’s note on line 411, with earlier bibliography; cf. *GMPT* 129 n.55; and LSJ revised supplement s.v.

in myrrh and write the names and characters on hieratic papyrus and roll the heart in the papyrus and place it on her *psychê* and ask questions. And she will confess everything to you.

This spell allows Ganszyniec to expand the body-part argument, although its details remain elusive. Since the papyrus has to be laid *somewhere* on a woman's body, he observes, ψυχή here cannot mean "soul."¹⁵ Although Ganszyniec did not consider this his best example, later scholars have returned to it repeatedly in support of his theory. *PGM*'s note to line 414 reasserts the φύσις equation made at *PGM* 4.377 and again renders ψυχή by *Natur*. Again, later studies have since offered similar translations or endorsements of Ganszyniec's double entendre.¹⁶

In this case, *PGM*'s precedent has also made itself felt outside the fields of Greek magic and papyrology. Ludwig Keimer, for example, an Egyptologist interested in a broad spectrum of cultural phenomena, repeated without comment or qualification *PGM*'s equation between ψυχή and φύσις in the course of an article on the hoopoe written in 1930.¹⁷ Some sixty years later, to take a more recent example, a similar citation of *PGM* for the vaginal meaning of ψυχή appeared in an article by the Assyriologist Erica Reiner about the interpretation of a cuneiform text—on which *PGM* 7.411–415, as it turns out, throws important light.¹⁸ Finally, and most recently of all the literature surveyed here, the claim has returned to an important work on ancient

¹⁵Ganszyniec's commentary, in full: "In 2. muß ψυχή einen Körperteil bezeichnen, natürlich am weiblichen Körper; auf die 'Seele' kann das Blättchen nicht gelegt werden."

¹⁶*GMPT* p.129 has "roll up the heart in the strip of papyrus and place it upon her pudenda." Martinez (*supra* n.11) 11–12 n.49 considers this Ganszyniec's sole convincing example. Cf. David Frederick Moke, *Eroticism in the Greek Magical Papyri: Selected Studies* (diss. Univ. Minnesota 1975) 341.

¹⁷M. Ludwig Keimer, "Quelques remarques sur la huppe (*upupa epops*) dans l'Égypte ancienne," *BFAO* 30 (1930) 305–331, at 327.

¹⁸E. Reiner, "Nocturnal Talk," in Tzvi Abusch *et al.*, *Lingering over Words: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran* (Harvard Semitic Studies 37 [Atlanta 1990]) 421–424, at 423 with n.13.

magic by way of Reiner's article. Matthew Dickie first notes the Babylonian connection observed by Reiner before summarizing the spell's command to place "the heart of a hoopoe on the private parts of a sleeping woman."¹⁹

We are, however, left with the text itself as evidence for the extended meaning of ψυχή. Underlying the omission of further explanation seems to be an assumption that the Greek "soul" had no bodily location; this is why ψυχή must mean something else altogether. The next step in the argument, then, concludes that the genitals are the obvious location for the talisman's application to a sleeping woman (a curious deduction, when one considers the tactical difficulties of the recommended procedure). But closer examination of the spell, its language, parallels, and precedents, offers more than an answer to an unvoiced argument. It also affords a glimpse of the soul—or at least tells us where to start looking.

Ganszyniec, after all, is right to emphasize the physicality of the spell. *PGM* 7.414 must refer to a bodily location. Even a magician might have trouble placing a papyrus-wrapped animal heart on a person's life principle. Unfortunately, exact verbal parallels from the magical papyri themselves (or anywhere else) offer little help with the question; there is no other certain instance of the phrase ἐπὶ τὴν ψυχήν in *PGM*.²⁰ Instead, I would propose two basic sources for insight on the puzzle. First, ancient traditions of speculation about the soul's location; and second, parallels to the spell in other ancient sources, including

¹⁹Matthew W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London 2001) 120 with n.100.

²⁰The closest possibility is *PGM* 7.989–991, where ψυχή is only a likely reconstruction and in any case must mean "into" (with εἰσβαίνω) rather than "on" (with ἐπιτίθημι, as here) the soul. I find no other comparable use of ἐπὶ τὴν ψυχήν in Greek, where the phrase indicates a bodily location. The phrase itself is relatively rare but perfectly normal, used most frequently with verbs of motion to indicate something entering "into the soul"; with τείνω (esp. in Plato and Platonists) to indicate something extending "to the soul"; with verbs like μεταφέρω to indicate application of a thought or practice "to the soul"; or with verbs like μεταβαίνω when changing the subject (or one's moral attention) "to the soul."

but not restricted to the magical papyri.

This is not the place for a survey of ancient thought about the soul's location; even after extensive analysis and classification, an account of multiple theories and traditions might not get us much closer to the world of the magical papyri. For the purposes of the argument at hand, in fact, it need only be shown that it was thought *possible* to locate the soul, spatially, in or on the body, and that there were traditions of Greek thought and practice that concerned themselves with the question. On this point there can be no doubt.

The most important and best-known philosophical traditions, in the first place, all offered arguments for locating the soul, or at least the seat of its principal activities, in one or more particular places in the body.²¹ Indeed, despite obvious differences among a host of theories of the soul, their conclusions about its location were not so diverse that favored candidates failed to emerge. On the contrary, the Stoic placement of the soul's "ruling" part (τὸ ἡγεμονικόν) in the heart (usually)²² has numerous parallels in Aristotle,²³ while Plato's famously tripartite conception included a place "in the breast" for the soul's "spirited" part.²⁴ Finally, if the Epicurean *anima* is spread throughout the body, Lucretius concretely located the

²¹For an account of ancient philosophical and medical ideas on the subject (with particular emphasis on the doxographical tradition), see Jaap Mansfeld, "Doxography and Dialectic: The *Sitz im Leben* of the *Placita*," *ANRW* II 36.4 (1990) 3056–3229, esp. 3092–3108. Cf. A. A. Long, "Soul and Body in Stoicism," *Phronesis* 27 (1982) 34–57, at 35.

²²*SVF* II fr.837–839, 879–881. Cf. Long (*supra* n.21) 54 n.5, who briefly summarizes the other traditions discussed here. Mansfeld (*supra* n.21) 3095 n.145 further discusses divergent views on the soul's location within the Stoic tradition.

²³For the soul's primary location in the heart in Aristotle's metaphysical and biological works as well as the *De anima* and elsewhere, see Edwin Hartman, *Substance, Body, and Soul: Aristotelian Investigations* (Princeton 1977) 138–139.

²⁴Pl. *Ti.* 70A. On the need to "take seriously" Plato's localization of the parts of the soul at *Ti.* 69D–72D, see T. M. Robinson, *Plato's Psychology?* (*Phoenix* Suppl. 8 [1995]) 106–107. Strictly speaking, the spirited part of the soul inhabits the region "between the diaphragm and the neck," although the heart itself takes pride of place in the exposition that follows (esp. *Ti.* 70A–B).

rational part of the soul (*animus*) in the chest.²⁵ Thus, while these varied opinions can hardly be called a consensus, their ideas about the soul's location represent a rare level of agreement about at least one location for at least part of the soul: the chest or the heart itself—although the head and brain also figure prominently in many accounts.²⁶

To this list one might easily add medical theories of many kinds. Indeed, specifically cardiocentric theories of soul found fertile ground in Greek medical thought, although several important thinkers (including Galen) favored the head, brain, or some specific part thereof as the seat of the soul or its ruling part.²⁷ As far as the passions were concerned, however, Galen agreed wholeheartedly with Plato on their origin in the breast, the seat of the spirited part of the soul.²⁸ Despite himself, Galen also offers insights into more popular conceptions of the soul's location in the course of refuting the Stoic Chrysippus, who had cited prevalent (but inexpert) opinions linking soul and heart. The "common account," we learn from Galen, put the soul in the breast.²⁹ Once again, however, additional examples from the

²⁵Lucr. 3.136–140. A convenient summary of the Epicurean division and placement of the soul is John M. Rist, *Epicurus: An Introduction* (Cambridge 1972) 79–80.

²⁶One could go back further still in Greek intellectual history, to Empedocles' cardiocentric ideas about soul and intellect, or to Pythagoras' placement of various soul parts in or near the heart and brain. See C. R. S. Harris, *The Heart and the Vascular System in Ancient Greek Medicine, from Alcmaeon to Galen* (Oxford 1973), esp. 1–28. For Empedocles, cf. Mansfeld (*supra* n.21) 3100 with n.174, and the texts printed and discussed at 3096.

²⁷See the sources adduced in Mansfeld (*supra* n.21) 3093–3094. Cf. Harris (*supra* n.26) 27–28.

²⁸Galen is more explicit than Plato about the centrality of the heart: Books 2 and 3 of the *De placitis* are primarily concerned with καρδία, not just the general region of the chest.

²⁹Gal. *De placitis* 3.1.22–33, 3.7.21–26. For extant Chrysippean fragments on the soul, see Chrysippus *De anima*, SVF II 235–263 (fr.886 for the present passage). See also Teun Tieleman, *Galen and Chrysippus on the Soul: Argument and Refutation in the De placitis Books II–III* (*Philosophia Antiqua* 68 [Leiden 1996]) 133–290.

papyri and elsewhere can shed further light on the problem.³⁰

The closest parallel to *PGM* 7.411–415 in the magical papyri, in terms of syntax and content, is illuminating but fragmentary. As Preisendanz reconstructs it, *PGM* 63.8–12 contains the following spell:³¹

[γυναικα κοι]μωμέ[νην] ὁμολο[γήσαι τὸ ὄν]ομα, οὐ
φιλεῖ· ὄρνιθος [γλωσσαν ὑπο]κάτω χ[ελ]υ[ν]ί[ων ἐπί]θες
αὐτῆς ἢ ἐπὶ καρδίαν καὶ ἀνα[ζήτει, καὶ τὸ ὄ]νομα
[κα]λεῖ τρίς.

For a sleeping woman to confess the name of the one she loves: Place a bird's tongue(?) under her lips or on her heart and inquire, and she calls the name three times.

While the application of part of a bird to a sleeping woman in order to reveal secrets establishes a fundamental similarity to *PGM* 7.411–415, verbal links between the two spells are also striking. If the reconstruction of *PGM* 63 is correct, both texts use the imperative ἐπίθες with ἐπί and an accusative: *PGM* 7 ψυχὴν directly parallels *PGM* 63 καρδίαν, although an alternative location also appears in the latter. In addition, reconsideration of the restored γλωσσαν in the mutilated beginning of *PGM* 63.10 suggests that the two spells may be still more closely related. Orthographically, the lacuna could be filled as easily with “heart” (καρδίαν) as with “tongue,” as Preisendanz himself suggested to an earlier editor of the papyrus.³² In terms of sense and magical usage, in fact, καρδίαν seems the more

³⁰I am not the first to suggest that *PGM* 7.411's ψυχὴ refers, like καρδία, to the chest. In fact the argument is more than one hundred years old. Ernst Riess, “Pliny and Magic,” *AJP* 17 (1896) 77–83, who first noted the link to Pliny discussed below, also addresses (82–83) the problem of locating ψυχὴ—and he concludes that it must be equivalent to καρδία, citing Cicero, another charm related by Pliny, and *PGM* 4.1522–1528.

³¹This spell, in the unissued third volume of *PGM*, is included in the second edition.

³²Hans Gerstinger, “Zauberpapyri,” *Mitteilungen aus der Papyrussammlung der Nationalbibliothek in Wien* n.s. 1 (1932) 159–164, at 161.

likely candidate.³³ If this is correct, then we have a spell directing its user to place a bird's heart on the heart of a sleeping woman, and the similarity to *PGM* 7.411–415 becomes striking indeed.³⁴ In any case, it is unnecessary (although tempting) to posit further equivalence between the spells compared here in order to observe that neither involves the genitals.³⁵ Is it not far more likely that the bodily location indicated by ψυχή at *PGM* 7.414 is simply, like καρδία and στήθος, the sleeping woman's breast?

A passage in Pliny's *Natural History* suggests that the answer is yes:³⁶

*nec omittam in hac quoque alite exemplum magicae vanitatis,
quippe praeter reliqua portentosa mendacia cor eius inpositum*

³³In support of γλώσσαν Preisendanz refers to a single, distant, and unlikely parallel in which the operative talisman is the tongue of a frog, not a bird: Armand Delatte, *Anecdota Atheniensia* I (Paris 1927) 88.5–8: τῶν δύο ἀδελφιῶν κάπνισον μὲ τὴν γλῶσσαν τοῦ βοθράκου ὡσάν κοιμᾶται· καὶ γράψον καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τῆς καὶ βάλ' τὸ εἰς τὸν λύχνον, ὡσάν φυτίλιν νὰ ἄφτη· καὶ ὁμολογᾶ σου τὰ ἔκαμεν. While a frog's tongue seems a natural choice for magical properties (as at *PGM* 10.38, for example; cf. Plin. *HN* 32.49), bird's tongues are not found in *PGM*. Bird's hearts, on the other hand, are comparatively common; beyond *PGM* 7.411, see 2.18, 3.425, and 12.437. Examples of bird's hearts from the *Cyranides* could be listed at length, although many chapters from this work's collections make use of nearly the entire bird in question (including, more rarely, bird's tongues) in listing magical properties, recipes, and procedures; some examples: *Cyran.* 1.2.14–26; 1.4.64–67; 1.7.49–75, 97–113; 1.10.44–45; 1.21.29–42, 59–60. The apparatus at *PGM* 63.10 also refers comparatively to *PGM* 7.411 (under study here), and to *Cyran.* 1.21.119–120, which concerns the heart of a hoopoe (? : καρδίαν κούκουφος; cf. *Cyran.* 1.7.49–56) but presents no further parallels to *PGM* 63.8–12.

³⁴Even if γλώσσαν is correct, a passage from the *Cyranides* offers yet another parallel in which an avian talisman, this time the tongue of a goose, placed on the breast (ἐν τῷ στήθει) of a sleeping person effects the confession of secrets: *Cyran.* 3.51.3–5, ζώσης οὖν χηνός εἴαν τις ἀποκόψη τὴν γλῶσσαν ψαλίδι καὶ ἀποθῆται ἐν τῷ στήθει καθευδόντος ἀνδρὸς ἢ γυναικός, ἐξομολογήσεται σοι πάντα ὅσα ἐπραξεν.

³⁵The phrase for “on the genitals” attested in the papyri is found at *PGM* 4.318: ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς φύσεως. Cf. εἰς τὰς φύσεις, “in[to] the genitals,” at *PGM* 4.326, 2593, 2655; 36.324.

³⁶*HN* 29.81; *eius* refers the *bubo* invoked in the previous sentence. The parallel between Pliny and *PGM* 7.411–415 is analyzed by Riess (*supra* n.30) 80–83, who not surprisingly links the Greek spell's ψυχή to the heart, corresponding to Pliny's “left breast.”

mammae mulieris dormientis sinistrae tradunt efficere, ut omnia secreta pronuntiet.

With regard to this bird, I will not fail to mention an example of magical fraud, for in addition to other monstrous lies they claim that the heart of an owl, placed on the left breast of a sleeping woman, causes her to divulge all her secrets.

Despite its Latin form, this is probably the single closest parallel to PGM 7.411–415 to survive from classical or late antiquity. While a number of spells (like PGM 63.8–12 above) offer methods for revealing a woman’s “true love” or her illicit lover, both PGM 7.411–415 and Pliny widen the scope still further to effecting the confession of “everything” (πάντα) or “all secrets” (*omnia secreta*). Although Pliny’s account lacks the procedural details found in the papyrus, the similarity between the two spells surely extends beyond coincidence. In any case, the most important feature of Pliny’s “example of magical fraud” remains the location prescribed for the talisman: *mamma sinistra* is not only convincingly specific, but also closely recalls another procedure recorded by Pliny (32.49) in which a frog’s tongue, placed “atop the beating of a sleeping woman’s heart,” causes her to respond truthfully to any question asked. In short, nearly all confession-inducing spells of this type involve application on the breast.³⁷

³⁷A possible exception (now listed in GMPT’s supplementary bibliography, p.350) is Damigeron-Evax, *De lapidibus* 67 (Robert Halleux and Jacques Schamp, *Les lapidaires grecs* [Paris 1985] 288). The text apparently concerns stones “from the nest of the hoopoe” and closes with the following sentence: *et si uiuenti cor contuleris et dormienti mulieri super pectinem posueris, si cum alio uiro coit, dicet per somnium*. While *pecten* is a known Latin euphemism for the pubic region (among other things; cf. Du Cange, *Glossarium mediae et infimae Latinitatis* VI 236–237), the key to the puzzle lies in the passage’s probable Greek original. *Pecten* would almost certainly indicate κτείς in the original spell, a word which can denote not only a comb, but also the ribs as well as the genitals; for the glossarial evidence, see George Goetz and Gotthold Gundermann, *Glossae latinograecae et graecolatinae, Corpus glossariorum latinorum* II (Leipzig 1888) 144, along with many other examples cited by Goetz in VII 59. In any case, the text’s differences with PGM 7.411–415 remain significant, particularly its restricted application to sexual infidelity, the woman’s oneiric confession, and the requirement of a living heart donor.

Finally, I would adduce the evidence of two curse tablets that represent a broad swath of space and time but nonetheless offer compelling support for the corporal location of ψυχή in the context of magic (at least). It is hardly an exhaustive list of soul-words in the *defixiones*, but the tablets discussed here suggest both the range and the matter-of-fact witness offered by the numerous specimens that have survived.

First, a lead curse tablet unearthed at Nemea in 1979, whose text should be read in full:³⁸

ἀποστρέφω Εὐβουλαν	ἀπὸ τᾶς γάστρου, ἀπὸ
ἀπὸ Αἰνέα, ἀπὸ τοῦ	[τ]οῦ, ἀπὸ τοῦ πρω-
προσώπου, ἀπὸ τῶν ὀφ-	κτοῦ, ἀφ' ὅλου τοῦ σώμα-
θαλμῶν, [ἀπὸ] τοῦ στόμα-	τος. ἀποστρέφω Εὐβου-
τος, ἀπὸ τῶν τιθθίαν,	λαν ἀπ' Αἰνέα.
ἀπὸ τᾶς ψυχᾶς,	

I turn Euboula away from Aineas: from his face, from his eyes, [from] his mouth, from his breasts [or nipples?],³⁹ from his *psychê*, from his belly, from his,⁴⁰ from his anus, from his entire body. I turn Euboula away from Aineas.⁴¹

³⁸Stephen G. Miller, "Excavations at Nemea, 1979," *Hesperia* 49 (1980) 178–205, at 196 [SEG XXX 353]. For a Hellenistic-Roman date see D. R. Jordan, "New Greek Curse Tablets (1985–2000)," *GRBS* 41 (2000) 5–46, at 32.

³⁹For male nipples on curse tablets (in this case directed against athletes), see the drawings reproduced in and discussed by David R. Jordan, "Inscribed Lead Tablets from the Games in the Sanctuary of Poseidon," *Hesperia* 63 (1994) 111–126, at 116–118.

⁴⁰According to Miller (196 n.41), David Jordan has suggested that the surviving strokes in line 8 may indicate the word ψωλίου, which seems appropriate enough in context.

⁴¹For another interpretation (and translation) of this spell, see John G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (Oxford 1992) no. 25, according to which "Euboula" is a man, "in the Doric form, Eubolês or Eubolas." But cf. now Henk S. Versnel, in Fritz Graf, ed., *Ansichten griechischer Rituale: Geburtstags-Symposium für Walter Burkert* (Stuttgart 1998) 217–267, at 231 n.38. In any case, Aineas is certainly a man, and ψυχή can hardly mean "vagina." Rather, as the progression demonstrates, his soul is centrally located, probably in the region of the chest. For a similar top-to-bottom list, although lacking ψυχή in its legible text, see *DT* 42B.2–9; a Latin example is *DT* 190.5–13.

The context, obviously, is both magical and erotic, the curse's targets unmistakably physical. Moreover, the tablet's "topographic" progression from head to groin is deliberate and significant, as its editor observes; "one notes particularly the localization of the soul or spirit" (197). In light of the texts discussed above, the placement of ψυχή in such a list is more readily explained. Closely identified with a widely accepted location in the chest (or midriff), ψυχή could be used, at least in the context of magic and cursing, to indicate the place itself.

Later in date and rooted in quite another recreational activity, a Roman-era curse tablet from Carthage offers similarly physical evidence for ψυχή, although it aims at the demise of a charioteer and his horses rather than a love affair:⁴²

ἀμαύρωσον αὐτῶν τὰ ὄμματα ἵνα μὴ βλέπωσιν, στρέβλωσον αὐτῶν τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ τὴν καρδίαν ἵνα μὴ [π]νέωσιν.
Blind their eyes so they cannot see, twist their soul and heart so they cannot breathe.

While αὐτῶν ensures that this part of the curse applies also to the horses, its anatomical assumptions are the same as those encountered above.⁴³ "Twist the soul" of a horse or a man and he cannot breathe. The image is at once powerful and manifestly physical, and it relies implicitly on the existence of a pectoral soul.

I suggest, therefore, that the use of ψυχή in *PGM* 7.411–415 need not be a matter of conjecture, in light of the magical parallels discussed above as well as broader traditions of ancient speculation on the soul's location. Most likely it simply indicates the chest or heart. Rather than requiring a new slang meaning for ψυχή, the spell at once echoes and amplifies essential connections between "soul" and "heart" found

⁴²*DT* 241.13–15 = *CIL* VIII 12511 (I–III^p).

⁴³The general applicability of these lines to both charioteer and horses is suggested by *DT* 242.57–60: ἀπόκνισον αὐτῶν τὰ ὄμματα ἵνα μὴ βλέπωσιν μήτε αὐτοὶ μήτε οἱ ἵπποι οὐδὲ μέλλουσιν ἐλαύνειν.

throughout Greek and Latin culture—and especially in magical contexts.

The fourth example⁴⁴ in “Das Märchen der Pythia” comes from a Megarian curse tablet of the first or second century A.D. (*IG III Suppl.* p.xiii; *DT* 41.A.16–21):

τρίχας κεφαλὴν ἐνκέφαλον πρ[όσ]-
 [ω]πον ἀκοὰς ὄφρ[ύς] μυκτῆρας οἱ
 [. . . .] . . ΠΡΟ σιαγόνας ὀδόντα[ς]
 [. . . .] ψυχὴν στοναχεῖν ὑγεία[v]
 [. . . .]τον αἷμα σάρκας κατακάει[v]
 [στον]αχεῖ ὃ πάσχοι καὶ - - -

In the context of the present topic, there is little to say about this fragmentary excerpt from a mutilated *defixio*. Quoting only the fourth line given here, Ganszyniec is characteristically terse: “4. steht mitten in einer Aufzählung der Körperteile.” This is misleading: the list of body parts is separated from the words in question by an important lacuna as well as a verb (*στοναχεῖν*) that can hardly apply to the list itself, which is exclusively concerned with the head and face.⁴⁵ Clearly, these three words neither prove nor disprove anything about the meaning of *ψυχή*, although the existence of a very different anthropological list a few lines before this one suggests a decidedly traditional, even biblical, usage of “soul” in the tablet.⁴⁶

⁴⁴Ganszyniec’s third example (*PGM* 7.559–563) need not detain us, since it stems from a misconstrual of the spell’s Greek text (which in fact concerns a spirit entering a *boy’s* *ψυχή*, and makes perfect sense in the familiar context of souls and possession). Not surprisingly, later studies have not included this passage among their examples for the double meaning of *ψυχή*.

⁴⁵A kind of progression seems intended in the list, although it breaks off after “teeth.” The inclusion of the verb between *ψυχὴν* and *ὑγείαν* marks this phrase off from the cephalic list above it; while “groaning” is common enough in the context of soul, it applies but poorly to hair, eyebrows, or teeth—or to the genitals, for that matter. In addition, in line 20 “blood” and “flesh” show that line 19 is not an interruption in (or in the middle of) the list above. The topic has changed.

⁴⁶*DT* 41.A.9–11: σῶμα πνεῦμα ψ[υ]χὴν | [δι]άνοιαν φρόνησιν αἴσθησιν ζοὴν | [καρδ]ίαν . . . For “spirit, soul, and body,” see 1 Thess. 5:23; cf. A. M. Festugière,

Ganszyniec lists one more text, this time from the *Cyranides* (1.18.45–49):

λίθος δὲ ἐκ τοῦ ἐχίνου μετὰ ἐνὸς κόκκου σατυρίου κεκλασμένος καὶ διδόμενος ἐν πόσει ἢ βρώσει μεγίστην ἔντασιν ποιεῖται, μάλιστα τῶν μὴ δυναμένων συνουσιάζειν, μήτε ψυχὴν ἀντὶ ψυχῆς κτίζειν.

A stone from the gizzard [of an ostrich]⁴⁷ with one seed of a *satyrion*,⁴⁸ ground down and given in drink or food, causes a massive erection, especially for those who are unable to have sexual intercourse or to produce “life for life.”

Ganszyniec calls this final example “unequivocal, as the context shows.” But need its frankly erotic content mean that ψυχὴν ἀντὶ ψυχῆς somehow refers to the genitals? Is such a meaning even possible for either of these instances of ψυχή?

The technical phrase ψυχὴν ἀντὶ ψυχῆς is in fact a formula found three times in the Septuagint for the Mosaic principle of restoring “life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth,” and so on.⁴⁹ Outside Jewish and Christian literature, the phrase remains rare but readily comprehensible as “soul for soul” (e.g., Porph. *Abst.* 4.15.13). It seems certain, however, that we are dealing here with something closely related to the phrase’s meaning in the Septuagint. The impotents for whom the recipe is especially effective are unable to “produce life,” that is, to procreate.⁵⁰

“La trichotomie de 1 Thess. 5,23 et la philosophie grecque,” *RecSciRel* 20 (1930) 385–415; and Martinez (*supra* n.11) 88–92.

⁴⁷ στρουθοκάμηλος, the operative bird in this chapter of *Cyranides*.

⁴⁸ A kind of orchid, *Aceras anthropophora*. For its legendary sexual potency, see Faraone (*supra* n.7) 20–21 with nn.88–95 and 127–128; Maryse Waegeman, *Amulet and Alphabet: Magical Amulets in the First Book of Cyranides* (Amsterdam 1987) 145; Dominic Montserrat, *Sex and Society in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (New York 1996) 202.

⁴⁹ Ex. 21:23–24, Lev. 24:19, Dt. 19:21.

⁵⁰ While ἀντὶ ψυχῆς may still seem obscure or simply superfluous, the conceptual language of insemination—detailed in learned medical treatises but found throughout the literature of classical and late antiquity—helps to clarify its import. New life depends on the life-depleting expulsion of one’s own “vital fluid”—or even part of one’s soul. The most arresting account of the theory is

The use of ψυχή in this chapter of the *Cyranides* belongs to one of the word's oldest and most established meanings: "life" itself, and the breath on which it depends.⁵¹

In sum, none of the original examples cited for the contention that ψυχή was a popular term for the vagina, analogous to φύσις, requires or suggests the new meaning. Moreover, comparison with parallels makes the intended meaning of ψυχή significantly clearer in these cases, whether it is used figuratively or to suggest a known place on the body. Since Ganszyniec, however, a number of scholars have offered several additional examples in support of his theory. We must examine these before addressing the one case in which an incipient argument has emerged.

Preisendanz appears to have been the first to draw attention to another striking instance of ψυχή, this time in the midst of a love spell addressed to Myrrh (*PGM* 4.1522–1531):⁵²

μη εἰσέλθῃς αὐτῆς διὰ τῶν ὀμμάτων, μη διὰ τῶν πλευρῶν,
μη διὰ τῶν ὀνύχων μηδὲ διὰ τοῦ ὀμφαλοῦ μηδὲ διὰ τῶν
μελῶν, ἀλλὰ διὰ τῆς ψυχῆς, καὶ ἔμμενον αὐτῆς ἐν τῇ καρ-
δίᾳ καὶ καῦσον αὐτῆς τὰ σπλάγχνα, τὸ στήθος, τὸ ἦπαρ,
τὸ πνεῦμα, τὰ ὀστᾶ, τοὺς μυελούς, ἕως ἔλθῃ πρὸς ἐμέ.
Do not enter through her eyes nor through her ribs nor through
her nails nor even through her navel nor through her limbs, but

Tert. *De anima* 27.5, although many others could be cited; Zeno *SVF* I fr.128 is the classic formulation. See also Aline Rousselle, *Porneia: On Desire and the Body in Antiquity*, transl. Felicia Pheasant (Oxford 1988), esp. 12–20; and Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York 1988) 17–25.

⁵¹See LSJ *s.v.* ψυχή I for "life." *Contra* LSJ's doubts (expressed after VII) about ψυχή's etymological connections to "breath" and breathing, see Hjalmar Frisk, *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* II (Heidelberg 1970) 1141–1142; Pierre Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* IV (Paris 1980) 1294. Cf. Jan Bremmer, *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul* (Princeton 1983) 21–22; Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*, transl. John Raffan (Oxford 1985) 195.

⁵²That is, the user invokes "myrrh" as a kind of daimon in order to get what he wants from the woman who is the object and victim of the spell. Myrrh soon gives way to more powerful deities, from line 1555 onward.

through her *psychê*, and dwell in her heart and burn her inward parts, breast, liver, breath, bones, marrow, until she comes to me.

PGM translates διὰ τῆς ψυχῆς as “durch die Scham.” As in previous cases, however, no one who has followed this suggestion explains how the double entendre might function.⁵³ But the reasoning is not difficult to deduce. After a number of bodily possibilities have been ruled out, the vagina might seem a natural point of entry for the myrrh-daimon. “Entrance” through an abstraction like the soul appears too difficult; awkward, if not quite impossible. But is “vagina” in this case a more likely or helpful interpretation than “soul,” after all? As above, both the text itself and parallels outside it combine to offer an answer at once decisive and suggestive.

First, the list of potential bodily entrance points is marked off sharply and deliberately by ἀλλά in line 1526. The daimon is not to enter through any known corporal portals, “but rather” through the woman’s ψυχή.⁵⁴ The emphatic repetition of μηδέ before the last two entrance points underscores the point: not even through her navel nor even her limbs but through a different kind of entrance altogether. It is tempting, in fact, to follow *GMPT* by interpreting the final prohibition διὰ τῶν μελῶν as “through her frame,” or even her “bodily frame.” The daimon, in other words, is not to enter through the woman’s body at all, “but rather through her soul.”

The injunction immediately following, to “remain in her heart,” further clarifies the implications of entrance through the soul. Recalling the affinity between soul and heart already noted above, the seamless transition from ψυχή to καρδία suggests that the caustic Myrrh, having entered via the former, has no

⁵³ *GMPT* p.339; Martinez (*supra* n.11) 12 n.49.

⁵⁴ Another spell addressed to Myrrh, involving entrance through a woman’s “right side” (ἀνοιγον αὐτῆς τὴν δεξιὰν καὶ εἰσελθε): *PGM* 36.333–360 (at 355). Interestingly, the victim must first be “opened” before the daimon enters her, in contrast to *PGM* 4.1522’s direct entry through the soul.

need to travel to the latter. It is already there, where it is to abide. The subsequent burning of “inward parts,” including the woman’s breast, liver, breath, bones, and marrow, is apparently another natural transition, and one that demonstrates that we are not dealing simply with a contrast between bodily and spiritual compulsion. If the list of internal “parts” to be burned is easily differentiated from the external entrance points above it, the physicality of both groups is nonetheless beyond doubt. But between the two lists stand the portal and the dwelling place, the soul and the heart. As elsewhere in the magical papyri (and especially the erotic spells), *ψυχή* and *καρδία* occupy a central position in more ways than one.

In the absence of other passages involving inspiration “through” the *ψυχή*, the most illuminating parallels in the magical papyri involve the entrance of a god or spirit directly into the soul.⁵⁵ This kind of inspiration is not difficult to find, and we have encountered one example already.⁵⁶ But a much closer parallel, although fragmentary, may offer more insight on the present case. “Enter into her,” seems to be the command at *PGM* 7.989, “into her soul and burn her heart, guts, liver, breath, bones.”⁵⁷ Once again *ψυχή* plays a central role, here perhaps both as divine dwelling place and as portal for the god.

Ganszyniec indirectly inaugurated another class of magical texts cited by later scholars when he concluded with a rather spicy suggestion: “I might add by way of an appendix that *καίο-*

⁵⁵ Although it does not appear in *PGM*, a spell preserved on a scrap of linen from the third or fourth century A.D. (*Suppl. Mag.* 44) offers the only other magical instance of *διά* τῆς *ψυχῆς* so far discovered and published (14): *ταχέω[ς] ἄξον ὄδε [Τα]πιάδαν ... διά τῆς ψυχῆς τοῦ ἀ[ώ]ρου*. It seems clear, however, that *διά* is used instrumentally. An interesting injunction indeed, but not quite a physical parallel to *PGM* 4.1522–1528. For a longer magical account of how such a “spirit” should do its work, see *Suppl. Mag.* 47, esp. lines 6–28.

⁵⁶ *PGM* 7.562 (cf. *supra* n.44) orders its spirit to “enter into [the boy’s] soul.”

⁵⁷ *PGM* 7.989–991: *[εἴσβηθι] τῆς δεῖνα, ἢ[ν] ἡ δεῖνα, ἐπὶ τὴν [ψυχὴν καὶ καρδῶ- σον τὴν καρ]δίαν, τὰ σπλάγ[χνα, τὸ ἦπαρ, τὸ πνεῦμα, τὰ ὀστέα]*. The text here, along with *PGM*’s reconstruction, remains problematic and apparently little studied.

μένην τὴν ψυχὴν, which turns up so frequently in love magic, can now be understood also in its popular, sexual sense.” The alleged double meaning, however, tends rather to weaken than to enhance the force of the fire and burning found throughout Greek love magic, as a closer look at individual cases reveals.

PGM endorses the burning theory at several points, beginning with the “entrance” passage discussed above (*PGM* 4.1526). There, as we have seen, fire is aimed at various targets, after Myrrh has entered the body through the soul. But ψυχή is itself the locus of burning at *PGM* 4.2486–2492:

βάδισον πρὸς τὴν δεῖνα καὶ βάσταξον αὐτῆς τὸν ὕπνον
καὶ δὸς αὐτῇ καῦσιν ψυχῆς, κόλασιν φρενῶν καὶ παροί-
στησις, καὶ ἐκδιώξασα αὐτὴν ἀπὸ παντὸς τόπου καὶ
πάσης οἰκίας ἄξον αὐτὴν ὧδε, πρὸς ἐμέ, τὸν δεῖνα.

Go to her and rob her of sleep and give her burning heat in her *psychê*, punishment and frenzy in her thoughts, and, having banished her from every place and every house, drive her here to me.

Translating ψυχή as *Natur*, Preisendanz includes the usual note equating the Greek word with φύσις.⁵⁸ But surely this misses the point: ψυχῆς is parallel in syntax, case, and sense with φρενῶν. In other words, soul and heart again, at least conceptually, a persistent combination throughout the erotic spells and especially in the context of burning.⁵⁹ This is not to diminish, however, the physical connotations of either word. The inspired frenzy of “thoughts” or “passions” indicated by φρένες might easily include the “midriff” as a choice locale for churning desire. Nor need ψυχή exclude corporal implications. On the contrary, its burning may well engulf the heart or chest—where such passions were physically perceived by learned and or-

⁵⁸ *Ad* 2488: “ψυχή hier wohl wie öfter: φύσις.”

⁵⁹ For ψυχή and καρδιά together in the context of burning: *PGM* 4.1526; 7.472; 7.990; 19a.51; 32a.3, 8; 36.80; 68.8, 14; *Suppl. Mag.* 40.17; 42.15, 36, 46, 54, 59; and possibly *DT* 51.3.

dinary people alike.⁶⁰

Perhaps because six of the fifteen “burning souls” in *PGM* belong to men, Preisendanz links only four of them to Ganszyniec’s theory. Three have already been discussed (4.1526, 4.2488–2489, 7.472), but the final example, from one of *PGM*’s five ostraca, deserves attention here. After an extended list of magical vowels and names, the curse gets down to business (Ostrakon 2.27–31):

καῦσον, πύρωσον τὴν ψυχὴν Ἀλλοῦτος, τὸ γυναικίον
σῶμα, τὰ μέλη, ἕως ἀποστῆ ἀπὸ τῆς οἰκίας Ἀπολλωνίου.
Burn, set on fire the soul of Allous, her female body, her limbs,
until she leaves the house of Apollonius.

By now Preisendanz’s translation of ψυχὴ (“Brenne, entflamme die Natur der Allûs”) should not come as a surprise, although a footnote suggests hesitance. As far as more recent scholarship is concerned, the text found its way into English in a collaborative effort of translation and commentary published in 1992: “Let burning heat consume the sexual parts of Allous, (her) vulva, (her) members, until she leaves the household of Apollonios.”⁶¹ The influence of Ganszyniec (doubtless via *PGM*) on this translation is clear, although unexplained in the notes.⁶² Not only has ψυχὴ become “sexual parts,” but the intriguing phrase τὸ γυναικίον σῶμα has been unaccountably reduced to “vulva.”⁶³

⁶⁰On this point see Galen’s critique of Chrysippus at *De placitis* 2.7.17–18, and 3.7.32–33.

⁶¹Gager (*supra* n.41) no. 35.

⁶²The translators do offer a footnote for “sexual parts” (111 n.112): “The Greek word is *psyche*.”

⁶³*Cf.* the same book’s translation of *Suppl.Mag.* 45.31–32: καύσατε αὐτῆς τὰ μέλη, τὸ ἥπαρ, τὸ γυνεκίον σῶμα, “Cause her limbs, her liver, and her genitals to burn” (no. 30). The third (relatively) certain example of γυναικίον σῶμα known in Greek magic is *PGM* 12.475, although the reconstruction has also been suggested for *PGM* 78.6 by Franco Maltomini, “Osservazioni al testo di alcuni papiri magici greci II,” *CCC* 1 (1980) 371–377, at 373. In any case, while “vulva” and “genitals” are certainly evocative conjectures for the phrase, they must be dismissed as fanciful. A search for γυναικίον σῶμα in

The literal interpretation these readings replace, however, is at once simpler and more profound. The spell demands that the whole person of Allous be set ablaze. The madness and frenzy with which burning is associated in Greek magic is, in modern terms, both psychological and physical. The context is erotic indeed, but the curse's full-scale fiery assault is far more ambitious than "burning genitals." The target is nothing less—and nothing more—than body and soul.⁶⁴

The ostrakon's γυναικεῖον σῶμα also helps to illuminate the one magical text in which the meaning "burning genitals" remains a possibility:⁶⁵

ἄξον Κοπρίαν ... Ἐλουρίωνι ... πυρουμένην, καομένην,
τηκομένην τὴν ψυχὴν, τὸ πνεῦμα, τὴν γυνεκίαν φύσιν.

Drive Kopria to Elourion, blazing, burning, melting in her soul,
her spirit, her female *physis*.

In 1985 David Martinez rendered γυνεκίαν φύσιν conservatively as "feminine part," a translation emended by the editors of *Supplementum Magicum* to "female genitals."⁶⁶ But this interpretation seems subject to doubt even with a word (φύσις) attested elsewhere for both male and female genitals.⁶⁷ As Martinez sug-

extant Greek literature yields examples that contrast "female bodies" to male ones, primarily for medical purposes (e.g., Erotianus *Voc. Hippocr. coll.* 43.19) but also more generally in the context of comparison between the sexes (e.g., Basil of Alexandria *Hom. in mart. Julittam*, PG 31.237.10); or passages that use the phrase for a similarly specific reason. None suggest anything like "vulva" or genitals.

⁶⁴Including, of course, τὰ μέλη, the body's constituent parts. For fire and burning in erotic magic, see Eugene Tavenner, "The Use of Fire in Greek and Roman Love Magic," in *Studies in Honor of Frederick William Shipley* (St. Louis 1942) 17–37; Lynn R. LiDonnici, "Burning for It: Erotic Spells for Fever and Compulsion in the Ancient Mediterranean World," *GRBS* 39 (1998) 63–98; Winkler (*supra* n.3) 86–91; and Faraone (*supra* n.7) 41–95.

⁶⁵*Suppl. Mag.* 48K.33–37; cf. Martinez (*supra* n.11) 29.

⁶⁶Martinez (*supra* n.11) 30; *Suppl. Mag.* I p.191. This translation and commentary first appeared in Martinez's dissertation: *P. Mich. 6925: A New Magical Love Charm* (diss. U. Michigan 1985). *Suppl. Mag.*, it should be noted, never translates ψυχή as "genitals," nor makes any reference to Ganszyniec's theory.

⁶⁷φύσις for genitals: *PGM* 4.318, 326, 2305, 2593, 2655; 36.82, 113, 150, 324; 62.103; *Suppl. Mag.* 38.12, 79.5; these thirteen examples comprise less than half

gests in a detailed commentary, “the three items together recall Paul’s trichotomy, τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ σῶμα ... with our τὴν γυναικείαν φύσιν representing τὸ σῶμα.”⁶⁸ Whatever the reality behind this interesting observation, the magical parallels noted above remain striking and perhaps decisive, particularly in light of the tablet’s manifest intention to engulf the “whole person” of its victim.⁶⁹ Clear parallels with γυναικείον σῶμα, the context of “soul” and “spirit,” and the fact that burning genitals do not otherwise appear in Greek magic all suggest that primary meanings like “nature” or “constitution” are preferable even in the midst of an explicitly erotic spell. This hardly prevents the existence of a double entendre, for ψυχὴ and πνεῦμα might have equally physical connotations, as we have seen. But the basic point remains secure: the pervasive fire envisioned by the erotic spells has much more to do with physical and psychological torture than with burning genitals. This fact stems neither from polite restraint (far from it) nor from a lack of appropriate vocabulary for the job (further still), but from the

the total of some thirty-three instances of the word (most often used for “nature” in magical texts). The adjective found with φύσις in PGM for “female” genitals is not γυναικείος but θηλυκός, always in contrast to ἀρσενικός/ἀρρενικός, “male”; see PGM 36.82, 112–113, 150.

⁶⁸Martinez (*supra* n.11) 90; *cf.* 1 Thess. 5:23.

⁶⁹Martinez (*supra* n.11) 90–92 offers a number of suggestions about the philosophical and theological implications of this trichotomy, concentrating on examples from magic as well as the New Testament. To his discussion I would add two other passages from the tablet (both involving ψυχὴ, incidentally), without exact parallels in the LXX or the New Testament but strongly reminiscent of biblical language: μητὲρ δυνηθῆ ... ἰσυχάσιν τῆ ψυχῆ ἢ ταῖς φρεσὶ (*Suppl.Mag.* 48J.10, 23; *cf.* Jer. 6:16, Matt. 11:29); and the poignant [αὐτὸν] φιλοῦσα ... ὡς τὴν ἑαυτῆς ψυχὴν (*Suppl.Mag.* 48J.12–13; *cf.* 1 Sam. 18:1, 3; 20:18). Together with the nearly “Pauline” trichotomy observed by Martinez in the passage discussed here, the spell’s biblical links seem sturdy indeed. Finally, the documentary papyri offer strong evidence for the use of σῶμα and ψυχὴ (and/or πνεῦμα) as the whole person—albeit in a biblical context of wishes for good health rather than cursing. Thus, *e.g.*, *P.Herm.* 5.14: ἐρρωμένον ψυχῆι τε καὶ σώματι; *P.Neph.* 1.4–5: ὑγιαίνουσι ὑμῖν ψυχῆι καὶ σώματι; and so on. Other examples include *P.Neph.* 1.30, 2.10–11, 7.11–12; *P.Oxy.* LXI 4127.8–10; SB VI 9401.8. Examples with πνεῦμα: *P.Coll.Youtie* II 91.5; *P.Harr.* I 107.8–9; *P.Neph.* 17.15; *P.Oxy.* VIII 1161.5–7; SB XII 11144.5. I am grateful to GRBS’s anonymous referee for drawing my attention to these texts.

debilitating (rather than arousing) intent of the fire itself.⁷⁰

As it happens, the most substantial case made for ψυχή's analogy with φύσις occurs in the glossary of the major English edition of the papyri (*GMPT*), under the entry "Soul" (339). While many of its examples have already been discussed in their full context, several additions highlight intriguing uses of ψυχή in Greek magic and literature. The gloss' first category lists five places in *PGM* where "psychê means female pudendum, i.e., a synonym of physis." Of these passages four have already been treated above, but the fifth deserves attention here (*PGM* 17a.8–20):⁷¹

ἄξον δ[έ μ]οι αὐτήν ... ἕως ἂν ὑπό σου μαστιζομένη ἔλθῃ
ποθοῦσά με, τὰς χεῖρας ἔχουσα πλήρεις, μετὰ μεγαλο-
δώρου ψυχῆς καὶ χαριζομένη μοι ἑαυτήν καὶ τὰ ἑαυτῆς
[κ]αὶ ἐκτελοῦσα ἃ καθήκει γυναιξ[ὶν πρὸς ἄνδρ]ας.

Drive her to me ... until, whipped by you [Anubis], she comes yearning for me, with her hands full, with a generous soul, both willingly offering herself and her possessions and fulfilling the things that women owe to men.

This ranks among the most sensuous spells in the magical corpus, not only for its explicit catalogue of desire, submission, and physical consummation, but also in its use of provocative words like χαρίζω for "granting favors" of all kinds. "Melting with passionate desire," Tigerous must give up not only her "arrogance" (ὑπερηφανία) but even her capacity for rational thought (λογισμός) as she is driven by Anubis' whip to grovel "under the feet" of Hermeias, her would-be lover (lines 6–10). This is the charged erotic context in which ψυχή appears—a context in which any attempt to reduce the word to sexual slang misses the point altogether. Pitched in a higher key, perhaps, the

⁷⁰On this important point, see esp. LiDonnici (*supra* n.64) 69–98; Winkler (*supra* n.3) 82–93; and Faraone (*supra* n.7) 41–95.

⁷¹The five are *PGM* 4.377, 2488; 7.414, 472; 17a.18. *GMPT* has "VI.277" for the first, but this must be a misprint.

love charm nonetheless traces a familiar pattern of torture and desire. “With her hands full, with a generous soul,” the spell explains, “offering herself and her possessions.” The chiasmus is clear and effective. Tigerous’ hands hold her worldly goods; ψυχή comprises her very self. And when it comes to “what women owe to men” Hermeias had a full stock of explicit and well-attested phrases at his disposal, among which ψυχή does not appear.⁷²

GMPT’s gloss concludes with three texts from non-magical sources by way of showing that “this meaning of *psychê* occurs also outside of PGM.”⁷³ Inspection of the three, however, suggests otherwise. The first two are from Juvenal and Martial, both castigating Roman women for using Greek phrases like ζωὴ καὶ ψυχή (Juvenal) or κύριέ μου, μέλι μου, ψυχή μου (Martial).⁷⁴ To be sure, the erotic context of the Greek words used by both authors is hardly a matter of doubt—Juvenal’s “life and soul,” like “my lord, my honey, my soul” in Martial, is pillow talk, and (apparently) arousing stuff at that. But beyond the fact that these endearments are addressed to men, slang for body parts may be safely discarded as part of the appeal. It is not the content of the phrases that makes these endearments erotic, but rather their coy Greek dress.⁷⁵

Finally, a single case from Greek literature. Ironically enough,

⁷²Thus the spell continues (22–23): μηρὸν μηρῶ καὶ κοιλίαν κοιλία κολλῶσα καὶ τὸ μέλαν αὐτῆς τῶ ἐμῶ μέλανι ἠδυστάτω. For this formula, cf. PGM 4.401–404; *Suppl.Mag.* 71 fr.5.2; and perhaps 73.ii.8 (as reconstructed).

⁷³These appear after several more magical examples which may be easily summarized. Instances of ψυχή from PGM 4.1040 and 4.1752 occur in the midst of solemn invocations where “soul” or “life” is clearly indicated by the context. Additional examples (4.2924–2925, 32a.15, 32.9–19) simply use ψυχή in the context of personal relationships, usually in conjunction with καρδιά.

⁷⁴Juv. 6.193–197: *non est hic sermo pudicus in uetula. quotiens lascium interuenit illud ζωὴ καὶ ψυχή, modo sub lodice relictis uteris in turba. quod enim non excitet inguen uox blanda et nequam? digitos habet.* Mart. 10.68.5–8: κύριέ μου, μέλι μου, ψυχή μου *congeris usque. Pro pudor! Hersiliae civis et Egeriae. Lectulus has voces, nec lectulus audiat omnis, sed quem lascivo stravit amica viro.*

⁷⁵On this point see the apposite commentary by William Barr in *Juvenal, The Satires*, transl. Niall Rudd (Oxford 1991) 174.

a line from Sophocles' *Electra* is on the face of it among the best evidence yet mustered for the magical link between ψυχή and φύσις. Clytemnestra has just learned of Orestes' death (as she thinks) and finds herself strangely saddened by the triumphant news. But with the messenger's observation that "we must have come in vain," she sharply disagrees (773–777):

οὔτοι μάτην γε. πῶς γὰρ ἂν μάτην λέγοις;
εἴ μοι θανόντος πίστ' ἔχων τεκμήρια
προσηλθες, ὅστις τῆς ἐμῆς ψυχῆς γεγώς,
μαστῶν ἀποστὰς καὶ τροφῆς ἐμῆς, φυγὰς
ἀπεξενούτο.

Certainly not in vain! How can you say "in vain" when you came bringing me certain proofs that he is dead? —he who, born from my *psychê*, abandoned my bosom and nurture, fled, and made himself an exile!

In fact, the phrase τῆς ἐμῆς ψυχῆς occasioned surprise long before the publication of *GMPT*, while the potential analogy with φύσις may go back to the fourteenth century.⁷⁶ But the context, surely, urges restraint. This is not Aristophanes (although comic playwrights signally fail to exploit the alleged double-meaning of ψυχή),⁷⁷ nor does it seem likely that only a modern audience would find erotic body-part slang less than probable in the midst of this speech. Thus, despite a taste for emending the text in the nineteenth century, modern scholarship no longer finds a problem with τῆς ἐμῆς ψυχῆς γεγώς, it seems, at least since Jebb's verdict that "it is strictly correct to describe a child as 'born from' its mother's 'life.'"⁷⁸ As many scholars since

⁷⁶Frederick Ellendt, *Lexicon Sophocleum*² (Berlin 1872) 794 s.v. ψυχή.

⁷⁷Admittedly an argument from silence, but Jeffrey Henderson's apparently exhaustive hunt, *The Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Comedy*² (Oxford 1991), for everyday as well as obscene words for genitals and anything else with sexual or scatological implications in Attic comedy, turns up nothing for ψυχή.

⁷⁸R. C. Jebb, *Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments VI The Electra* (Cambridge 1894) 113 apparatus, and note to line 775, continuing "Here the phrase has a pathetic force; his very life was her gift." Ellendt (*supra* n.76) is still useful for Sophocles' frequent use of ψυχή for "life."

Jebb have observed, “life” is the primary sense of ψυχή in Clytemnestra’s speech.⁷⁹

In short, literary examples for the vaginal meaning of ψυχή turn out upon inspection to offer no more support for Ganszyniec’s theory than magical ones. An ancient word with a complex history, ψυχή does not appear to have been employed as slang for the genitals in magic or anywhere else. Closer attention to its usage in magical sources, however, promises to add substantially to a long century of intensive study of the word⁸⁰—especially in places where its erotic context has occasioned surprise and creative speculation.⁸¹

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⁷⁹Notably J. H. Kells, *Sophocles: Electra* (Cambridge 1973) 151; J. C. Kamerbeek, *The Plays of Sophocles V* (Leiden 1974) 109; Georg Kaibel, *Sophokles: Elektra* (Leipzig 1896) 192 (a longer discussion). Virtually all translators since Jebb have “life” or equivalent: thus Paul Masqueray (Paris 1924), David Grene (Chicago 1957), H. D. F. Kitto (London 1962), Wolfgang Schadewalt (Zurich 1968), William Sale (Englewood Cliffs 1973), Maria Pia Pattoni (Milan 1997), Anne Carson (Oxford 2001), Jenny March (Warminster 2001).

⁸⁰Studies of ψυχή and related concepts have centered on Homer, philosophy, and literature through the classical period. Some important books include Erwin Rohde, *Psyche: Seelencult und Unsterblichkeitsglaube der Griechen* (Leipzig 1894); Joachim Böhme, *Die Seele und das Ich im homerischen Epos* (Leipzig 1929); Richard Broxton Onians, *The Origins of European Thought About the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World, Time and Fate²* (Cambridge 1954); David B. Claus, *Toward the Soul: An Inquiry into the Meaning of ψυχή before Plato* (New Haven 1981); Bremmer (*supra* n.51); Thomas Jahn, *Zum Wortfeld “Seele – Geist” in der Sprache Homers* (Munich 1987). While the periodical literature is also substantial, ψυχή’s fortunes after the Hellenistic period remain comparatively neglected, apart from studies of individual philosophers.

⁸¹I am grateful to Michael McCormick, Ralf Behrwald, and Christopher P. Jones for comments on earlier versions of this paper.