

LESBIANTIQUITY

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HERAIS

BIND HER TO ME

LESBIANTIQUITY © Georgina Barker (Portknockie: Sapphizdat, 2024)

Hera's translation, introduction, and notes © Amy Pistone 2024

Greek text from: Karl Preisendanz, ed., *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1931)

Back cover art: 'Inflamed Heart' © Emily Setzer 2024

THE TRANSLATOR

Professor Amy Pistone

I am an Associate Professor at Gonzaga University, where I teach on a wide range of topics, though my primary area of research is Greek tragedy and its reception. I did my PhD at the University of Michigan, where my dissertation focused on oracular language in the plays of Sophocles, but I have recently worked on postcolonial reception, Greek mythology in comic books, ancient athletics, and ancient Greek drinking games.



'HPAIZ

A papyrus, dated to the 2nd century CE, preserves a spell in which Herais, a woman, seeks to enchant Sarapias, another woman. Very few magical texts depict clear same-sex erotic desire, making this spell an important contribution to our understanding of these spells as well as erotic relationships between women.¹ The style is repetitive, as is common in magical texts, with abundant references to the lineage of both parties. This too is a common element of magical texts, since it is important to specify the precise people that the gods are meant to enchant. The names invoked – all women's names – are a mix of Greek (Herais and Helen) and Egyptian (Thermoutharin and Sarapias), and this papyrus was written in Greek but found in Egypt, so we are likely seeing a spell that comes out of a multicultural context.

¹ For some other examples of female homoerotic spells, see the *Supplementum Magicum* 1.37 & 1.42; Parr (2020); and LESBIANTIQUITY 21 & 28.

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ROOT & BRANCH READING GUIDE

Our translations branch out to explore
a variety of options for the text:
any variants in the original <Greek
Latin> texts
and the various possible meanings in English.

Our translations are rooted in the words
of the original text, replicating when possible
word order, root meanings of words, and
grammatical gender $\left(\begin{matrix} [n] \\ [f] \\ [m] \end{matrix} \right)$ of words about people.

You, the reader, will choose which branches you prefer to follow.

THE HERAIS TEXT READING GUIDE

Line breaks preserve the formatting in the papyrus.

[indicates that the text has broken off and is not legible beyond that point in the line. [Grey text inside square brackets] has been supplied by the editor; due to the spell's repetitiveness, we can be very sure the supplements are right.

Text in <angled brackets> is an editorial correction to scribal errors.

A dot under a letter (ω) indicates that the letter is not fully visible on the papyrus and this letter is the best reading the editor can provide, but it is not certain.

Voces *magicae* are in italics, transliterated from the Greek. Some approximate pronunciations: e = **egg** / ē = **air**, o = **not** / ō = **note**

PGM 32

[l] bind you by oath, Euangelos,

by Anoubis and

Hermes and all the <other[s]
rest[]>

below, (bring
lead) and (tie down
keep bind
enchant)

5 Sarapias, whom [f]

Helen bore, to Herais herself,

whom [f] Thermoutharin bore,

just now just now swiftly

swiftly. From soul and heart,



Ἐξορκείζ[ω] σε, Εὐάγγελε,

κατὰ τοῦ Ἀνούβι[δο]ς καὶ

τοῦ Ἑρμοῦ καὶ [τ]ῶν λοι[πῶν] πάν

των κάτω, ἄξαι καὶ καταδ

5 ἦσαι Σαραπάδα, ἣν ἔτε

κεν Ἑλένη, ἐπ' αὐτήν Ἑρα

εῖδαν, ἣν ἔτεκεν Θερμο

υθάριν, ἄρτι, ἄρτι, τα

χὺ ταχὺ. ἐξ ψυχῆς καὶ καρδίας

NOTES

1 *oath*: the word for oath, *horkos*, is etymologically connected to the word for fence, *herkos*, suggesting a shared element of constraint or restriction.

1 *Evangelos*: the name literally means ‘good messenger’.

2–3 *Anoubis and Hermes*: the two gods are commonly associated.

5, 10, 15 *Sarapias*: a variant of Serapis, derived from Egyptian gods’ names – Osiris and Apis. (See Paganini 2008.)

7, 18 *Thermoutharin*: a variant of the more common Thermoutarion, derived from an Egyptian god’s name as well (ultimately connected to Isis). (See Solin 1996.)

5–7, 10–11, 16–18 In the context of a (hoped-for) same-sex relationship, using maternal lineage rather than paternal lineage may be an intentional and meaningfully gendered choice, as Ogden (2002 p. 234) suggests. For general discussion of matronymics, see Broux & Depauw (2015).

8–9 *just now just now swiftly swiftly*: the sounds of my translation aim to capture the breathless impatience of the Greek *arti arti takhu takhu*.

9, 15 *soul and heart*: we see this collocation of *ψυχή* and *καρδία* in other spells, including P. Koln Inv. No. 5514. (See Daniel 1975.)

- 10 $\left(\begin{smallmatrix} \text{bring} \\ \text{— lead —} \\ \text{keep} \end{smallmatrix} \right)$ Sarapias herself,
 whom [f] <Helen> bore $\left\langle \begin{smallmatrix} \text{in} \\ \text{with} \end{smallmatrix} \right\rangle$ her own $\left\langle \begin{smallmatrix} \text{womb} \\ \text{maternal place} \end{smallmatrix} \right\rangle$
maei ote elbōsatok
alaoubētō ōeio [
] *aēn*, $\left(\begin{smallmatrix} \text{bring} \\ \text{— lead —} \\ \text{keep} \end{smallmatrix} \right)$ and $\left(\begin{smallmatrix} \text{tie down} \\ \text{— bind —} \\ \text{enchant} \end{smallmatrix} \right)$
 15 soul[and heart of Sarapias,
 whom [f] [Helen] bore, [to
 Hera] her[self, whom [f]
 Thermoutharin [bore $\left\langle \begin{smallmatrix} \text{in} \\ \text{with} \end{smallmatrix} \right\rangle$] her [$\left\langle \begin{smallmatrix} \text{womb} \\ \text{maternal place} \end{smallmatrix} \right\rangle$],
 [just now just now swiftly swiftly].



- 10 ἄγε αὐτὴν τὴν Σαραπιά
 δ[α], ἣν ἔτεκεν <Ἑλένη> εἰδία μήτρ
 α, *μαει οτε ελβωσατοκ*
αλαουβητω ωειο [
 αην, ἄξον καὶ κα[τάησ
 15 ον ψυχὴ[ν καὶ καρδίαν Σαραπιάδο
 ς, ἣν ἔτεκεν [Ἑλένη, ἐπ' αὐ
 τὴν Ἑραεῖ[δαν, ἣν ἔτεκε
 ν Θερμουθά[ριν μήτ
 ρα] αὐτῆς, [ἄρτι ἄρτι, ταχὺ ταχὺ].

11–12, 17–19 *bore in/with [her] womb / maternal place*: the fairly rare use of ἔτεκεν ... μήτρα is also paralleled in P. Koln Inv. No. 5514. (See Daniel 1975.) The translation ‘maternal place’ for ‘womb’ conveys the etymology of *mētra*, which is virtually identical to the Greek for ‘mother’.

12–14 In the untranslated letters in the middle of the passage we see a series of ‘magical words’, another feature of the spell genre (something like *abracadabra* in modern English use). These letters do not form any recognizable words and are instead meant to be recited. For more on magical words and names – which largely remain mysterious as to their origin and meaning, but have often been conjectured as being derived from Coptic, Hebrew, Aramaic, and other languages – in the magical papyri, see Tardieu (1981); Scholem (1960) p. 36; and Alon (1977).



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