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The background of the cover features a purple-tinted image of two women in classical-style clothing. The woman on the left is shown in profile, facing right. The woman on the right is shown in profile, facing left, and is holding a laurel wreath. The text is overlaid on this image.

MANETHO
MANETHON

WHEN A WOMAN'S
STARS ARE IN
MASCULINE PLACES

LESBIANTIQUITY © Georgina Barker (Portknockie: Sapphizdat, 2024)

Manetho translation, introduction, and notes © Ruby Ostrow 2024

Greek text from: Jane Lightfoot, ed., *Pseudo-Manetho: Apotelesmatica, Books Two, Three, and Six* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020) and Jane Lightfoot, ed., *Pseudo-Manetho: Apotelesmatica, Books Four, One, and Five* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023)

Back cover art: 'Astrologer' © Emily Setzer 2024

THE TRANSLATOR

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I am a recent graduate of Bard College, where I majored in Classical Studies and Computer Science. My classical thesis explores two conceptions of a multiplicitous self as developed in Homer's *Odyssey* and Lucian's *A True History*. In this work, I juxtapose Homer's Odysseus, the *anēr polytropos*, whose fullest expression arises through a harmonization of discordant aspects, with Lucian's view of selfhood as manifested in open-ended, continuous creativity. I am currently doing a Master's program in Natural Language Processing.



MANEΘΩΝ

Manetho (alternatively Manethon) is the name assumed by four authors of six books of astrology written between the second and fourth centuries CE and collected as the *Apotelesmatika*. The authors are often all listed as Pseudo-Manetho, since though Manetho may have been the real name of the initial second-century author, it is considered more likely that the name refers back to the early Egyptian astrologer Manetho, who was born around the third century BCE.¹

The initial author wrote Books 2, 3, and 6, which together create a whole poem.² In Book 6, this Manetho names his birthdate as 28 May, 80 CE, so these books must have been composed in the first half of the second century. Books 4, 1, and 5 seem to have been composed in the third century, in that chronological order, by three different poets,³ with the entire work not having been compiled until around 400 CE.⁴ Here I present one excerpt from Book 3 and one excerpt from each of the three later books.

The didactic poem the *Apotelesmatika* remains an important astrological work regardless of its disputed authorship, as it presents another example of the astrological thinking of the day and the traits associated with various planets and planetary configurations. Here the focus is primarily on the Sun, the Moon, and the five planets, the movement of the sky, and the nine celestial circles (both visible and invisible).⁵

¹ Gundel & Gundel (1966) p. 160.

² Gundel & Gundel (1966) p. 160.

³ See Lightfoot (2023), especially pp. 1002–3.

⁴ Reed (1997) p. 91.

⁵ Ypsilanti (2006) pp. 65–6.

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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 ($\begin{pmatrix} [n] \\ [f] \\ [m] \end{pmatrix}$) of words about people.

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

APOTELESMATIKA 3.383-391

<and
but> if in a female birthplace the two <luminaries
lights> <appear
shine>

in masculine (constellations
signs
living beings), she again with very <arrogant
valiant>
<spirit
desire>

385 becomes <terrible
clever> and icy, and <unbending
rigid> of heart.

and when then, if the <luminaries
brightnesses> are in these (constellations
signs
living beings),

and fiery <Mars
Raging One> and beautiful-haired <Venus
Kytherea>

<see
observe>, having (trampled
stepped
trespassed) on masculine <signs
representations>

and the (ascendant's
horoscope's
hour-regulator's) <constellation
sign> of these becomes male,

390 they cease her nature; beside beds of women

they recline [f] in <sexual love
affection>, what men [do] they <complete
fulfill>



εἰ δ' ἐνὶ θηλυτέρῃ γενέθλῃ δύο φῶτα φανείη
ἄρσεσιν ἐν ζώοις, ἢ δ' αὖ μάλ' ἀγήνορι θυμῷ

385 δεινὴ τε κρυερὴ τε πέλει πραπίδεσσί τ' ἄκαμπος.

ὀππότε δ' οὖν σελάων τοίοις ζώοισιν ἐπόντων
καὶ Θεῦρος πυρόεις καὶ καλλίκομος Κυθήρεια
ἄρσεσι δεικῆλοισιν ἐπεμβεβαῶτες ὀρῶντο,
καὶ ζῶον πρὸς τοῖς ἄρσεν πέλοι ὠρονόμοιο,

390 ἧς φύσιος λήγουσι, παρὰ λεχέεσσι γυναικῶν
κλινόμεναι φιλότητι, τὰτ' ἀνέρες ἐκτελέουσιν.

NOTES

Apotelesmatika Book III (part of the original first-century didactic poem) mainly discusses the planets in and opposite the Cardines, aspect, and, in the section this excerpt comes from, luminaries and gender. ‘Ideally’, the luminaries (the brightest ‘planets’ – the Sun and the Moon) should both appear under signs of their own gender, masculine for the Sun and feminine for the Moon. Here, a woman is born with both in masculine signs.

3.384 *ζώοις*: signs or constellations of the zodiac, literally ‘living beings’. Manetho seems to follow the concept from Plato’s *Timaeus* of the stars as living beings, specifically, as gods made of fire, which (significantly for astrology) are assigned to individual souls at birth (Lightfoot 2020 pp. 180–1).

3.384 *ἀγήνορι θυμῶ*; *arrogant/valiant spirit/desire*: an ironic quote from a lion simile about Achilles in Homer’s *Iliad* (24.42; Lightfoot 2020 p. 707). Manetho plays on the ambivalence of the adjective *agēnor*, which is usually positive (‘valiant’) but sometimes pejorative (‘arrogant’) (CGL p. 7). The fact that it is left to the reader to intuit the pejorative sense (and the joke) suggests that ascribing a masculine trait to a woman is akin to an insult. The Homeric reference only emphasises her hypermasculinization.

3.385 *πραπίδεσσί τ’ ἄκαμπτος*; *unbending/rigid of heart*: another heroic reference, to Pindar’s Herakles (*Isthmian* 4.53b; Lightfoot 2020 p. 707). *Prapides* is literally the area around the heart, the center of feeling and thought.

3.387 *Κυθήρεια*; *Kytherea*: an epithet of Aphrodite/Venus, arising from the island Cythera, one mythological birthplace of the goddess.

3.389 *ὠρονόμοιο*: horoscope or Ascendant, where celestial bodies rise over the eastern horizon; instead of the standard *ōroskopos* (literally ‘hour-watcher’) Manetho uses *ōronomos*, literally ‘hour-regulator’.

3.390 *ἥς φύσις*; *her nature*: here the planetary circumstances are shown not simply changing the character or behavior of the women but rather getting in the way of what they rightly should be. This is commonly seen in discussions of *tribades* (the astrologer Ptolemy draws a contrast between *kata phusin*, ‘naturally’, about overly sexual men, and *para phusin*, ‘contrary to nature’, about *tribades*). A woman being active in sexual circumstances and/or pursuing other women is regarded as so strange that it is represented as an outer incursion upon her true feminine nature by this astrological influence.

APOTELESMATIKA 4.354-358

and when \langle Mercury's
Hermes' \rangle rays shoot \langle Saturn
Kronos \times on high
at long range \rangle ,

355 and when \langle Mars \times havoc-rouser
Ares \times war-bringer \rangle they \langle oversee
behold \rangle with him,

he who hits \langle Dionean
Dione's daughter \times Venus's
Kypri's \rangle swift star,

at that time indeed it creates $\left(\begin{array}{l} \text{wanton} \times \text{ones [f]} \\ \text{lustful} \times \text{women} \\ \text{harlots} \end{array} \right) [\dots]$

and prostitutes [f] and *tribades* \langle completing
fulfilling \rangle [f]

\langle men's screwing \times works
man-turning \times things \rangle .



Ἑρμείου δ' ἀκτῖνες ἐπὴν Κρόνον ἀκροβολῶσιν,
355 Ἄρεά τ' ἐγρεκύδοιμον ἐπὴν ἐφορῶσ' ἐπὶ τούτῳ,
ὅς δέ Διωναίης Κύπριδος θεὸν ἀστέρα βάλλη,
τηνίκα δὴ μαχλάδας τεύχει ἴταστοῖα φεῖσας,
πόρνας τε τριβάδας τ' ἀνδρόστροφα ἔργα τελούσας.

NOTES

This excerpt occurs towards the beginning of its section in *Apotelesmatika* Book IV. The poetic language here is similar to that of the first-century Books, as is the content, including discussions of the planets and stars and their configurations and how these affect individuals.

4.354–5 ‘Mercury aspects Saturn, plus Mars, which in turn aspects Venus’ (Lightfoot 2023 p. 652).

4.354 *ἀκροβολῶσιν*; shoot ... on high / at long range: if Mercury is far from Saturn, perhaps the aspect is not conjunction (Lightfoot 2023 p. 652).

4.355 *ἐγρεκύδοιμον*; rousing the din of war / war-bringer: epithet of Ares/Mars, common in ancient poetry, such as in Hesiod’s *Theogony*.

4.356 *Διωναίης Κύπριδος*: an epithet and name of Aphrodite/Venus. ‘Dionean’ comes from the goddess Dione, who is identified as her mother in some versions of her myth, and ‘Kypris’ from Cyprus, her other mythological birthplace (see note 3.387 above).

4.357 *μαχλάδας*; wanton/lustful ones [f] / women // harlots: *machlas* is the feminine version of the generally masculine-associated adjective *lagnos*, ‘lustful’. We may note that Ptolemy’s *Tetrabiblos* 3.15 uses *lagnoi* when discussing the *tribades* and other groups born under the same planetary configuration. In that circumstance, the *tribades* are associated with men who are overly sexual in nature. Here, though, we see that the *tribades* are instead grouped with female prostitutes (*pornas*: 358), thus with women likely reputed to be overly sexual. So, while the *tribades* are still associated with masculinity in this passage (as is evident in the next line), they are still considered more feminine by Manetho than by Ptolemy, given their grouping here with other women and with a feminine-associated adjective for lust.

4.357 The end of this line is corrupt and incomprehensible.

4.358 *ἀνδρόστροφα ἔργα*; men’s screwing / man-turning works/things: this phrase bears the same sense as *andrōn erga*, ‘men’s works’, a phrase commonly seen with *tribades*, but with the addition of *-strofa*, ‘turning’, in ‘the specialised sense of *στρέφειν* for sexual intercourse’ (Lightfoot 2023 p. 653; see also p. 636).

ΑΠΟΤΕΛΕΣΜΑΤΙΚΑ 1.29-33

both luminaries being in masculine [signs]

- 30 opposite feminine < Venus
Kypris > and the (ascendant
horoscope
hour-regulator),
in male < works
things > they force women
to revel, a great < astonishment
wonder >: for being [f] woman- < crazed
mad >
< painfully
troublesomely > they marry < for
into > X painful
troublesome X sexual love
affection >.



- 30 ἀμφότεροι φωστήρες ἐν ἀρσενικοῖσιν ἐόντες
θηλυτέρης Κύπριδος τε καὶ ὠρονόμοιο κατιθύ,
ἀρσενικοῖς ἔργοισιν ἀναγκάζουσι γυναῖκας
τέρπεσθαι, μέγα θαῦμα· γυναιμανέες γὰρ ἐοῦσαι
ἀργαλέως γαμέουσιν ἐς ἀργαλήν φιλότητα.

NOTES

Apotelesmatika Book I ranges in its astrological observations, including discussion of various effects of Mars and Venus, the birth charts of royalty, and parents. This excerpt comes from a section at the beginning of the Book covering the effect of luminaries (the Sun and Moon) in different gendered positions.

1.32 *μέγα θαύμα*; a great astonishment/wonder: this sudden authorial comment emphasizes the perceived strangeness of a woman playing a more active role in society and being with other women. *Thauma* is often translated as ‘wonder’, as in something fantastical and essentially otherworldly in its shock value.

1.32 *γυναιμανέες*; woman-crazed/mad: the epithet Homer uses about Paris (*Iliad* 3.39, 13.769; Lightfoot 2023 p. 763).

1.33 *γαμέουσιν*; they marry: while in English the referent of ‘they’ is unclear, in the Greek, because *eousai*, ‘being’, is a feminine form, we know the subject of the sentence must be female, and therefore must be ‘the women’, as the past subject, *phōstēres*, ‘luminaries’, is masculine. This is interesting particularly given the verb used: *gameō*, ‘marry’. This verb in its active form as we have here nearly always has a masculine subject, as the active definition means essentially not just to marry but to take to wife. In contrast, another form of the verb (the middle) has a more passive or reflexive meaning, specifically ‘give oneself in marriage’, which generally takes a female subject. Therefore grammatically we can see that the woman born under this circumstance is particularly masculine or active in her role in a relationship. As Lightfoot (2023 pp. 763–4) points out, ‘this could just be the use of *γαμείν* for sexual intercourse [...], with the active pointedly assigned to women who take the active role, but it might also recall Ptolemy’s *τριβάδες* in 3.15.9, who, likewise under a double dose of masculinisation, openly take “wives”.’ (See LESBIANTIQUITY 20.)

ΑΠΟΤΕΛΕΣΜΑΤΙΚΑ 5.214-216

But if you took a woman, < ^{having}_{who has} > [f] in masculine [places]

Moon and < ^{Sun}_{Helios} >, understand what the configuration < ^{makes clear}_{shows} >:

the < ^{works}_{things} > of men she < ^{completes}_{fulfills} >, sharing her bed with [f] women.



εἰ δὲ γυναῖκα λάβοις εἰν ἀρσενικοῖσιν ἔχουσαν
Μήνην Ἥελίον τε, νόει τὸ σχῆμ' ὅ τι δηλοῖ·
ἀνδρῶν ἔργα τέλεσσε γυναιξὶ συνευνάζουσα.

NOTES

Apotelesmatika Book V covers topics such as good and bad stars, various effects of Mars, and birth charts specifically relating to women. This excerpt occurs immediately after a discussion of how the positions of the Sun and Moon cause eunuchs and otherwise feminine men to be born, destined to do women's work at the loom and spindle.

5.214 *γυναικα*; a woman: we infer that this refers specifically to her birth chart and not simply to her as an individual.

5.215 *σχῆμ*; configuration: the layout of the celestial bodies in the birth chart.

5.216 While we have the phrase *andrōn erga*, 'men's works', associated as usual with a *tribas* (as is implied here), we find the additional phrase *gunaixi suneunazousa*, which specifically means 'being a bedfellow with women'. In this way, men's work is directly linked in this passage to sleeping with women – as opposed to other passages where the two things are kept as separate attributes of *tribades*.



Emily Dwyer

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