

unless Artemis orders . . . just as . . . insufficient . . . stood by and saw . . . me alive . . . stood by and saw . . .

THIS DISTINCTIVE PRAYER FOR JUSTICE WAS deposited in the main temple of Oserapis in the Serapeum at Memphis. It is the oldest of the Greek Magical Papyri and one of the earliest Greek papyri of any kind. Artemis's daughter had died untimely and had, furthermore, been left unburied or inadequately buried. Her ghost will accordingly be restless; compare 110, 112. Artemis prays that the same fate should befall the child's father; it is unclear whether the father is her husband, but it would seem that the couple is estranged. Removal from its place of deposition will deactivate the curse; hence an additional curse against anyone who does remove it, unless they should have Artemis's consent. For deactivation see also 180, 197, 204, 209, 238, 246.

**191 A Megarian lead prayer for justice appeals to Hecate** A. ZŌAPHER TON THALASSOSĒ-MON ["sea-sign"?] SEKNTĒPAPHO-

i/ii A.D.

DT 41 (CT no. 85)

Greek

NOCHAI the little child Panaitios, whose name is written [text becomes lacunose] . . . CECHAIAM . . . we register them . . . EKAIPĒN . . . and we devote them to evil. Althaea, Kore, OREOBAZAGRA, Hecate the tail-eating, Moon. ITHIBI . . . ME . . . we devote these people to evil, body, spirit, soul, intellect, reflection, perception, life, with Hecataean words and Hebraic oaths . . . justice . . . Earth, Hecate . . . under the command of the holy names and the Hebraic oaths, hair, head, brain, face, ears, eyebrows, nostrils . . . jaws, teeth . . . soul groan, health . . . blood, burn flesh . . . groan at what (s)he suffers . . .

B. I adjure . . . the triple-named Moon . . . middle of the night, whenever . . . nurtured and the divine . . . running through heavens, strong-handed, observable, blue-robed . . . by land and by sea, Enodia . . . we deposit these people with you . . . we register them for punishments, penalties, and revenge . . . the body. A thing devoted to evil [*anathema*].

THIS PRAYER FOR JUSTICE ADDRESSED (untypically) to Hecate exhibits strong Jewish influence. This is found not only in explicit references to Hebraic oaths but also in the use of the Septuagint terms *anathema* and *anathematizō*, denoting the Judaeo-Christian concept of devotion to evil. There is also a touch of Egyptian imagery in the assimilation of Hecate to an *ouroboros*.

## THE EVIL EYE

**192 A disquisition on the mechanics of the evil eye** Problem: On those said to evil-eye [*katabaskainein*].

Early ii A.D.

Plutarch *Moralia*  
680c–683b (*Table Talk*  
problem 7, edited)

Greek

[Mestrius Florus speaks:] For we know of people who do severe harm to children by looking at them, influencing their development in this weak and tender stage, and turning them to the bad. Those with sturdier and full-grown bodies are less susceptible to this. And yet Phylarchus [FGH 81 F79] says that the Thibians, who long ago lived in the area of Pontus, were deadly not just to children but also to adults. Those on the receiving end of a look, a breath, or an utterance from them wasted away and fell sick. This was the experience, as it seems, of those people who used to import mixed-race slaves [translation based on the reading *mi-gadas*] from them.

**[Plutarch speaks:]** It is likely that this [the streaming of emanations from the body] should occur above all through the eyes. For vision is mercurial and conveyed by a medium that gives off a fiery radiance. It diffuses an amazing power. Hence, men experience and effect a great deal through it.

**[Plutarch speaks:]** Envy [*phthonos*] similarly naturally penetrates the soul and fills the body up with evil, which artists make good attempts to portray when painting an envious face. So when people consumed by envy rest their eyes on persons, and these eyes, being situated adjacently to the soul, draw evil from it and attack the persons as if with poisoned/bewitched [*pepharmagmena*] missiles, it is not at all unexpected or unbelievable, I think, if they influence the persons they look at. For dog-bites are more severe if the animals bite in anger, and they say that people's sperm takes hold better when a couple feel desire. All in all, the emotions of the soul intensify and invigorate the powers of the body. That is why people think that the category of "anti-evil-eye" amulets/talismans [*probaskania*] help against envy, because they draw off the gaze by their bizarreness, so that it rests less upon those that are affected by it.

**[Scolarus speaks:]** If we consider true what many say about those subject to the evil eye, you are well aware, I believe, that they suppose that friends and relatives, even fathers, according to some, have an evil eye [*baskanos*], with the result that their wives will not show them their children or let the children be looked upon by such people for any length of time. Given this, how can the evil eye still be considered the work of envy? And what, by Zeus, will you say about those people who are said to evil-eye [*katabaskainein*] themselves? For you have heard of that. But at any rate you have read:

Beautiful once, beautiful were the locks of Eutelidas. But that destructive man looked into the river's eddy and evil-eyed [*baskainen*] himself. At once he was seized by an unseemly sickness . . . [Euphorion F175 Powell]

It is said that Eutelidas thought himself beautiful and was undone by looking at himself. As a result of this he fell sick and lost his health together with his bloom. See if you have the inventiveness to account for such a strange phenomenon.

**[Plutarch speaks:]** All emotions, dwelling in souls for an extended period, effect evil conditions in them. When these evil conditions have become ingrained, they are set in motion by any chance cause and often direct the emotions against family and friends. . . . It is only to be expected that people should look more upon their family and those they love. That is why they also damage them more. . . . Self-evil-eyeing is usually caused by emanations from water or some other reflective surfaces. These emanations bounce back upon the lookers so that people are harmed by the same mechanism by which they themselves harmed others. Often perhaps this is what is happening with children, while those who look upon them are wrongly accused.

**[Gaius speaks:]** Democritus says that the envious emit images [*eidōla*], not altogether without their own realization and impulse, and that they are full of the wickedness and evil-eyeing [*baskania*] that derives from their projectors. Together with this wickedness and evil-eyeing these images mold themselves to, remain with, and take up residence with the evil-eye victims and damage and blight their body and mind.

FOR ALL THE IMPORTANCE OF ACTUAL eyes in the difficult concept of the "evil eye," the normal ancient terms for it do not incorporate an eye-word (Greek *baskania*, Latin *fascinatio*). Despite its latter-day rationalization, Plutarch's discussion usefully lays out the beliefs that underpinned the concept:

- The evil eye was primarily generated by the emotion of envy (Greek *phthonos*, Latin *invidia*). The archetypal evil-eye-ers of mythology were the envious and envied Telchines (22–3). Sorcery is often associated with envy. This underpins many of the curse tablets (168–84; see Faraone 1991a). Sorcerers are sometimes portrayed as enjoying competitive, envious relationships with each other; see 295.
- It was probably, even before such scientific rationalization, primarily conceived of as a blighting ray that was projected from the eye.
- However, it could also work through speech (195) and breath.
- It could be deliberately projected, as is magnificently illustrated by Medea's use of it to destroy Talos (70).
- It could also be inadvertently projected, tragically against one's own loved ones.
- It often acted against fertility. People, animals (194), or plants were particularly vulnerable to its blight in their developing stages (the occasion of the initial envy), especially those of promise. Hence, children and crops were its primary victims.
- It was particularly associated with: (1) a selection of remote, marginal races; (2) fathers. See 193 for both.
- It could be defended against with protective amulets. Note that the Telchines were metalworkers (22–3). A surviving intaglio depicts a disembodied eye pierced by a dagger (Delatte and Derchain 1964 pp.72–3).

From further sources we also learn:

- It was also particularly associated with people, especially women, with double pupils (102, 193).
- It was particularly associated with delivery by a sidelong look (196).
- It could blight rites of magic, and so sorcerers, living as they did in a world of envy and slander, particularly feared it: compare 157, 169, 211, 300.
- It could blight developing love affairs (195).
- It could be averted by spitting (193); see 148.
- It could be averted by the phallus, and in particular by phallus amulets (193).
- It could be averted by the skin of the hyena (47).

**193 Remote races associated with the evil eye; the phallus protects babies and triumphing generals from it**

i A.D.

Pliny *Natural History*  
7.16–8, 28.39

Latin

7.16–8. Isigonus and Nymphodorus report that in the same part of Africa [i.e., adjacent to the Nasamones] there are certain families of evil-eye-ers [*effascinantes*], at whose praise meadows perish, trees dry up, and children die. Isigonus adds that there are people of a similar kind among the Triballians and the Illyrians, who evil-eye also with looking and kill those they direct their gaze toward for a longer time, particularly when they have anger in their eyes. Adults are more prone to experiencing this evil. It is somewhat noteworthy that they have two pupils in each individual eye. Apollonites adverts women of this sort too in Scythia, who are called the Bitiae,

and Phylarchus also the race of the Thibians and many others of a similar nature in Pontus. These, he reports, are distinguished by having a double pupil in one eye and the shape of a horse in the other. Moreover, these same people cannot be drowned, not even when weighed down by clothes. Damon speaks of the not dissimilar race of the Pharnaces in Ethiopia, whose sweat draws corruption out of bodies to which it is applied. Our own Cicero too guarantees that all women everywhere blight by looking if they have double pupils. Indeed when nature had produced in men the wild practice of eating human innards, she also decided to produce poisons [*venena*] throughout the body and actually in the eyes of some people, lest there should be some evil somewhere that was not in man.

28.39. If we believe this, we should also hold that the due course of action, if a stranger arrives or a sleeping infant is looked upon, is that its nurse should spit on it three times. However, *Fascin* too gives due divine protection to the child, guardian similarly of generals as he is, not just of infants. In Roman religion the cult of this god is maintained by the Vestal Virgins. He also protects the chariots of generals from envy [*invidia*] as they parade in triumph, hanging underneath them, like a doctor. A similar spoken medicine bids the generals look behind them, so that Fortune, the executioner of fame, may be propitiated behind him.

THE ROLE OF ENVY IN THE evil eye is again made clear. *Fascin* was the phallus-deity, embodied in phallus effigies, and he had the power to avert the action of the evil eye. For the protective power of the phallus, compare the "herms" of Attica and the phallic god Priapus, whom Horace portrays as averting the witches Canidia and Sagana (91). Pliny refers to the custom of hanging phallus effigies around the necks of babies. The phallus and spitting alike could afford protection from the evil eye; the two methods are combined in a Roman mosaic portraying a phallus ejaculating into a disembodied eye (Bernard 1991, 102). See 47 for more of Pliny on the evil eye.

**194 The evil eye reduces Menalcas's sheep to emaciation** Yet for these [sheep]—and love is not the cause—they scarcely stick

Ca. 38 B.C. to their bones. Some eye or other is evil-eye-ing [*oculus . . . fascinat*] my tender lambs.

Virgil *Eclogue* 3.103

Latin

THE EMACIATION OF THE SHEPHERD'S flock is caused by envy.