

**Zeitschrift:** Museum Helveticum : schweizerische Zeitschrift für klassische Altertumswissenschaft = Revue suisse pour l'étude de l'antiquité classique = Rivista svizzera di filologia classica

**Herausgeber:** Schweizerische Vereinigung für Altertumswissenschaft

**Band:** 62 (2005)

**Heft:** 1

**Artikel:** Twisting and turning in the prayer of the Samothracian initiates (Aristophanes Peace 276-279)

**Autor:** Faraone, Christopher A.

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-47929>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 17.01.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

## Twisting and Turning in the Prayer of the Samothracian Initiates (Aristophanes *Peace* 276–279)

By Christopher A. Faraone, Chicago

Early in the plot of Aristophanes' *Peace*, the comic hero Trygaios watches helplessly as Polemos ("War"), the ogre who has imprisoned Peace in a cave, hauls a huge mortar on stage and calls for his henchman Kudoimos ("Battle-Din") to bring him a pestle with which he will grind up and destroy mankind with battles and armed conflicts. As Polemos lists the various Greek cities that will be crushed in his mortar, Trygaios responds with a series of asides to the audience bemoaning the fate of Greece and joking about the recent battle at Amphipolis, at which the two firebrand generals, Cleon and Brasidas, were killed. In the midst of this sequence, Trygaios pleads with the audience to help prevent Kudoimos from returning with the pestle (276–279)<sup>1</sup>:

ὦνδρες, τί πεισόμεσθα; νῦν ἄγων μέγας.  
ἀλλ' εἴ τις ὑμῶν ἐν Σαμοθράκῃ τυγχάνει  
μεμυημένος, νῦν ἔστιν εὖξασθαι καλὸν  
ἀποστραφῆναι τοῦ μετιόντος τὸ πόδε.

What is going to happen to us, men? This is the crunch now. If any of you happens to have been initiated at Samothrace, now's a fine chance for you to pray that the errand-boy may safely – get two twisted feet!

This passage has not attracted much interest, in part because the text is uncontroversial and in part because scholars have traditionally seen the final line as a passing παρὰ προσδοκίαν joke, unimportant to the plot or comic ideas that develop in the play: they generally note that initiates in the Samothracian mysteries were thought to be protected from shipwreck and other disasters by calling out secret names or uttering special prayers<sup>2</sup> and they suggest that the last line begins with what could be a serious plea to ward off some danger (ἀπο-

1 I give the text and translation of A. H. Sommerstein, *The Comedies of Aristophanes*, vol. 5: *Peace* (Warminster 1985). With one very minor variation (ἄγων instead of ἄγων) all of the commentators mentioned in note 3 below print the same text.

2 The scholia to line 277a speak of Samothracian ἀλεξιφάρμακα used to ward off dangers and at 277b they tell how initiates could call on the Korybantes and Hekate to appear and protect them. The comic writer Alexis seems to allude to the same idea when he describes how a host at a dinner party becomes alarmed at the huge amount of food a parasite is gobbling down and then "prays the Samothracian prayers that he (i.e. the parasite) cease blowing and become calm" (τὰ Σαμοθράκ' εὖχεται / λῆξαι πνέοντα καὶ γαληνίσαι). There the Samothracian connection is easier to make because the source of danger (a glutton who threatens to eat everything) is likened to a life-threatening gale on the sea.

στραφῆναι), but then ends unexpectedly with a lame joke (pun intended): “Let there be a turning back of – the messenger’s feet.”<sup>3</sup> According to this traditional reading, then, a prayer for salvation is comically altered in mid-verse to a request that someone twist Kudoimos’ ankles or break his legs.

Despite the ongoing modern consensus that all or some<sup>4</sup> of the words τοῦ μετιόντος τῷ πόδε (line 279) provide an unexpected and ludicrous subject for the passive infinitive ἀποστραφῆναι, there has been some uneasiness about this tradition of interpretation. The scholiasts, for example, do not speak of any παρὰ προσδοκίαν joke at this point in the text and they interpret the infinitive differently, equating it either with διαστραφῆναι (“to be twisted back” or “to be dislocated” i.e. at the joint) or with κλασθῆναι (“to be broken” i.e. the bones)<sup>5</sup>. According to ancient commentators, therefore, the traditional prayer itself called for the violent twisting of Kudoimos’ legs, and indeed, at least one modern editor suggested without comment that we alter the infinitive in Aristophanes’ text to διαστραφῆναι<sup>6</sup>. Modern scholars have not, moreover, taken into account the ways in which this passage closely mimics the content, language and imagery of traditional Greek incantations, which fall into a closely related pair of categories: amulets and love spells mainly of Roman date that aim “to turn away” diseases from patients or “to divert lovers” from rivals (i.e. a form of “apotropaic” or “deflective” magic) and binding curses and related amulets of Classical and later date that aim “to twist back” or “to distort” hostile human opponents or attacking demons and diseases, a kind of magic for which I propose – solely for the purposes of clarity – to create the neologisms “apostrophaic” or “distortive” magic<sup>7</sup>.

3 See the comments ad loc. of, e.g.: W. W. Merry, *Aristophanes: Peace* (Oxford 1900); H. Sharpley, *The Peace of Aristophanes* (Edinburgh 1905); J. Van Leeuwen, *Aristophanis Pax* (Lugduni 1906); M. Platnauer, *Aristophanes: Peace* (Oxford 1964); Sommerstein (n. 1) and S. D. Olson, *Aristophanes: Peace* (Oxford 1998). Olson alone notes in passing that supernatural binding of an opponent is a common feature of Greek magic, a point that I shall vigorously pursue in what follows.

4 Sommerstein (n. 1), as the dash in his translation quoted above reveals, feels that the joke is triggered by the last two words, as does Sharpley (n. 3), who remarks ad loc.: “... when the messenger’s feet are suddenly substituted, ἀποστραφῆναι suddenly does duty for διαστραφῆναι.” Van Leeuwen (n. 3) ad loc. and Merry (n. 3) ad loc., on the other hand, punctuate their texts with dots and dashes (respectively) to indicate that τοῦ μετιόντος τῷ πόδε should be taken altogether as the trigger of the joke.

5 See the scholiast’s comments at line 279a and b.

6 F. H. M. Blaydes, *Aristophanis Pax* (Halis Saxonum 1883) ad loc.

7 C. A. Faraone, *Talismans and Trojan Horses: Guardian Statues in Ancient Greek Myth and Ritual* (Oxford 1992) 4 and 7–9 discusses the category of apotropaic magic for Greek magic. It is curious that although the adjective ἀποτρόπαιος is used to describe protective deities like Apollo, the verb ἀποτρέπειν is to my knowledge rarely used in such a way and only in the earliest strata of our evidence, in the introduction to Hesiod’s *Theogony*, where the poet praises the ability of poetry to turn aside (παρέτραπε) grief and Empedocles Fragment 2 (Wright): ἀλλὰ θεοὶ τῶν μανίην ἀποτρέψατε γλώσσης.

In this study, therefore, I use this neglected pool of comparanda to show that the Samothracian prayer described by Aristophanes is not a *παρὰ προσδοκίαν* joke, since all three parts of it – the verb ἀποστρέφειν, the anatomical target (feet) and the use of a participle of a verb of motion (τοῦ μετιόντος) to describe anonymously the danger (i.e. “the one who approaches”) – find parallels in ancient Greek magical spells, especially in the earlier “apostrophaic” tradition. These comparanda suggest, moreover, that the scholiast correctly understood that the poet was using the rarer connotation of the verb to mean “to distort”, albeit not in the literal sense of dislocating a joint or breaking a bone, but in the more diffuse sense of “to confound”, common in Greek binding magic. In my conclusion I also explore the ways in which this scene in the *Peace* is related typologically to the more common one in which a comic hero banishes a demonic figure from the stage. Indeed, like the other scenes where antagonists or obstructionists are physically dragged from the stage or chased away with sticks and stones, I argue that this passage probably reflects a very old ritual substructure of Old Comedy, which among other things originally aimed at driving effigies of evil and danger from the city. In this light it is quite significant that the goal of Aristophanes’ Samothracian prayer is to prevent Kudoimos, a personification of the destructive capabilities of war, from coming onto the stage, for we have evidence from Homer onwards that the Greeks ritually bound up or incarcerated images of inimical war gods like Ares or Enyalios to prevent the movement of hostile armies against them and that they depicted other potentially destructive gods like Death or Hephaestus (in his guise as the personified force of “Fire”) with one or both feet twisted back as a way of impeding their dangerous approach.

Let us begin by analyzing how Aristophanes describes the Samothracian prayer. As was mentioned, above call modern commentators note that the verb ἀποστρέφειν used in the final line of the passage illustrates the belief that Samothracian initiates learned special apotropaic prayers that allowed them to “turn away” dangers and disasters, especially those concerned with seafaring<sup>8</sup>. It has not, however, generally been acknowledged that this same verb appears in a series of Greek magical texts, some of which date as early as the fifth century BCE<sup>9</sup>. These texts generally fall into the two categories described above:

8 See, e.g. Sharpley (n. 3) ad loc. and Sommerstein (n. 1) ad loc.

9 The following abbreviations for the basic corpora and surveys of ancient Greek magical texts will be used throughout:

*DT* = A. Audollent, *Tabellae Defixionum* (Paris 1904).

*DTA* = R. Wünsch, *Defixionum Tabellae Atticae*, Appendix to *Inscriptiones Graecae* III (Berlin 1897).

*GMA* = R. Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets*, Vol. 1, *Papyrologica Coloniensia* 22.1 (Opladen 1994).

*PGM* = K. Preisendanz/[A. Henrichs], *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die Griechischen Zauberpapyri* (Stuttgart 1973–1974).



“apotropaic” pleas to turn away danger and “apostrophaic” ones that demons or rivals be distorted or confounded in such a way that they can do no harm. The apotropaic tradition is perhaps the best known to the modern scholar, but as far as I can tell from the extant evidence it is a rather late phenomenon in the Greek-speaking world. It shows up, for instance, in amulets of Roman and later date that ask a beneficent god or supernatural entity to “turn away” some pending harm or danger, for example, in a nearly identical pair of second-century CE Greek inscriptions from southern France and a third from Tunisia of similar date that are all designed to protect vineyards from destructive storms<sup>10</sup>: “Turn away (ἀπόστρεψον) from this place all hail and snow” or “Turn away (ἀποστρέψατε) from this place ... hail, rust, the anger of Typhonian winds ...” We also find this verb in a number of late-Roman and early Christian incantations that avert human diseases – e.g. headache, stomachache, eye disease and perhaps swelling – “away from” (ἀπό) the person who wears the amulet<sup>11</sup>. A recently published gold amulet of early second-century CE date and allegedly from Asia Minor or Syria seems to use the same formula against headache, but the syntax is unorthodox, referring as it does to the patient in the dative: ἀπόστρεφε, Ἰησοῦ, τὴν Γογῶπα ... καὶ τῇ παιδίσκῃ σου, τὴν κεφαλαλγίαν ... (“Jesus, turn away the Grim-Faced One, ... and on behalf of your maidservant, the headache ...”)<sup>12</sup>. There are, moreover, two examples of its use in formulas that ban more generalized forms of misfortune, for example: an early Christian house-amulet that turns away “every evil” and an Augustan-era silver amulet from Pontus that averts wrongdoers<sup>13</sup>.

SGD = D. Jordan, “A Survey of Greek Defixiones Not Included in the Special Corpora”, *GRBS* 26 (1985) 151–197.

SM = R. Daniel/F. Maltomini, *Supplementum Magicum*, 2 vols., *Papyrologica Coloniensia* 16.1 and 2 (Opladen 1990 and 1991).

The numbers following these abbreviations indicate the number of the text in the corpus, unless otherwise specified.

- 10 *GMA* 11 ἀπόστρεψον ἐκ τούτου τοῦ χωρίου πᾶσαν χάλαζαν καὶ πᾶσαν νιφάδα[ν] (two nearly identically inscribed bronze plates from Avignon and Mondragon) and ἀποστρέψατε ἀπὸ τοῦδε χωρίου ... χάλαζαν, ἐρυσειβὴν, ὀργὴν τυφόνων ἀνέμων (inscription on stone from Sidi Kadou, Tunisia, for the text of which and bibliography see the appendix to *GMA* 11).
- 11 *PGM* XVIIIa (a papyrus amulet from Egypt dating somewhere between the 3rd and 5th century CE): Κύριε Σαβαώθ, ἀπόστρεψον ἀπὸ ἐμοῦ [κ]όπον, νόσον τῆς κεφαλ[ῆς]; C. Bonner, “A Miscellany of Inscribed Gems”, *Hesperia* 23 (1954) 149 no. 36 (date and provenance not given): ἀποστρέψατε ... πᾶσαν ἀπεψίαν, πᾶν πόνον στομάχου ἀπὸ Ἰουλιανοῦ; and *GMA* 53.9 (gold amulet from Tyre[?]) of late Roman/early Byzantine date): ἀπόστρεψον τὴν ἐπιφερομένην ὀφθαλμίαν καὶ μη[κέ]τι ἐάσης ὀφθαλμ[ίας] τιν’ ἐνβο[λὴν] γενέσθαι. D. R. Jordan, “The Inscribed Gold Tablet from the Vigna Codini”, *AJA* 89 (1985) 165–166, suggests in passing that a partially published silver tablet from Ságvár in Hungary reads in part ἀπ[ο]στρέ<φε>ιν ἐλεφαντία[σιν] (“to avert swelling”), but provides no date or any indication of the fuller syntax.
- 12 R. Kotansky, “An Early Christian Gold *Lamella* for Headache”, in: P. Mirecki/M. Meyer (eds), *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World* (Leiden 2002) 37–46.
- 13 *GMA* 41.24–26: ἀπόστρεψον πᾶν κακὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ οἴκου τούτου (4th–5th cent. CE gold amulet from Phthiotis in Thessaly) and *GMA* 36.14–15: καὶ εἴ τις με ἀδικήσῃ ἐπέκεινα, ἀπόστρεψον (1st cent. BCE/1st cent. CE silver amulet from Pontus).

Most scholars seem to think that this type of formula was the traditional form of the Samothracian prayer that Aristophanes begins to describe, but then abandons midstream for his joke. Many editors, for instance, suggest that after the infinitive the audience expects to hear something like τὸν κίνδυνον, and van Leeuwen even supposed that the traditional prayer was something like ἀποστραφῆναι ἀπὸ τοῦ δεῖνα πᾶν κακόν, a formula that perfectly matches those on the amulets cited earlier<sup>14</sup>. From this line of interpretation, then, the Samothracian prayer is imagined as an apotropaic or deflective one, which Aristophanes then changes unexpectedly by finishing the line with “the two feet”, thereby invoking the other, more violent meaning of the verb (“to dislocate” or “to break”) and transforming this prayer into a call for thuggery. This argument, however, runs into trouble when we are confronted with the second tradition of Greek magical spells that use ἀποστρέφειν in a very different manner, one that is nicely illustrated by the two exceptional amulets noted above – the gold one fashioned against “the Grim-Faced One” and the last mentioned amulet from Pontus. The former imagines the invasive headache as a grim-faced demon and the latter aims at the aversion of a human enemy, perhaps (as the most recent editor suggests) in the context of a lawsuit<sup>15</sup>. These two exceptional amulets also differ linguistically from the rest, which as we have seen command a supernatural ally to “turn away” the danger “from” (ἐκ or ἀπό) a specific place (a vineyard or a house) or from a specific person or body part (“Julianus” or “my head”)<sup>16</sup>.

As it turns out these two exceptional amulets most probably derive from a very old tradition of binding curses – some of them dating to Aristophanes’ lifetime – that the Greeks used to restrain or confound their rivals<sup>17</sup>. The earliest extant evidence for the use of the verb ἀποστρέφειν in any magical text, in fact, is an early or mid fifth-century BCE *defixio* from the sanctuary of Demeter

14 See ad loc., e.g.: Sharpley, Platnauer, and Olson, and – for the Greek quote – van Leeuwen (all cited earlier in n. 3).

15 Kotansky *GMA* ad loc. The preceding line reads: “Drive away the lawsuit (ὑπόθεσιν)”, but this amulet also wards off poison (φάρμακον: lines 15–16).

16 We can probably infer a third example from the text inscribed on the inscribed gold amulet used to cure ophthalmia, which likewise lacks any prepositional phrase and also seems to imagine the disease vividly as an attacking foe: *GMA* 53, see note 7 for Greek text. The two descriptions of the diseases on this amulet – τὴν ἐπιφερομένην ὀφθαλμίαν and ὀφθαλμ[ίας] τιν’ ἐνβο[λήν] – have strong military connotations. See LSJ s.v. ἐπιφέρειν (which in the passive voice usually means: “rush upon or after, attack, assault”) and ἐμβολή (definition ii) which can refer to “a foray into enemy territory”, “the charge of a bull” or the “ramming of one ship by another”. Kotansky, ad loc. translates the later as “onset” by extrapolating a less vivid meaning from the related verb ἐμβάλλειν, which means to “put in”, but it seems best here to allow the words their traditionally more vigorous and hostile connotations.

17 On the “defensive stance” of the earliest *defixiones*, see C. A. Faraone, “The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells”, in: C. A. Faraone/D. Obbink (eds), *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (Oxford 1991) 3–32.

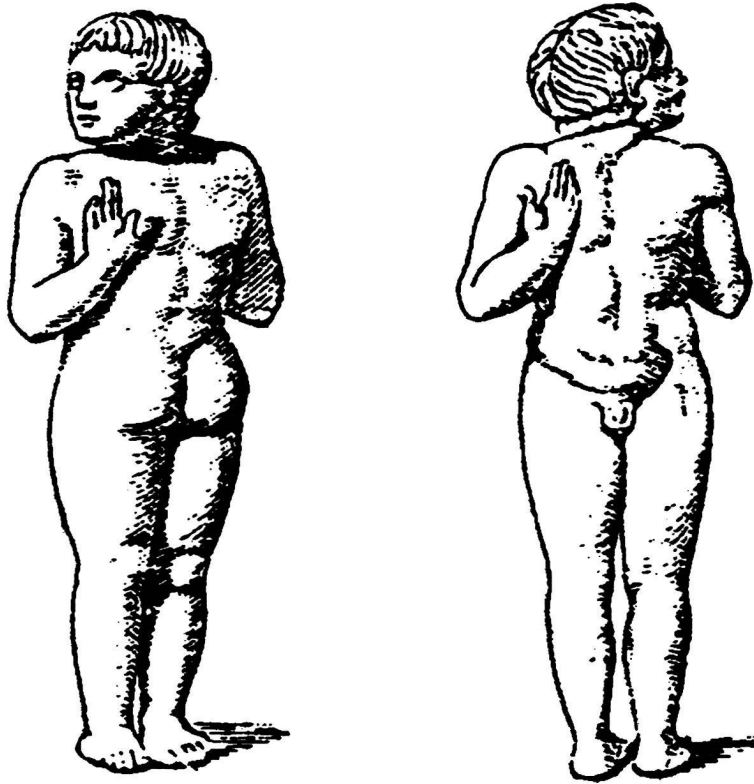


Figure 1. Archaic or Hellenistic bronze figurine from Cephalonia (after *Melusine* 9 [1898–1899] 104, fig. 11).

Malophoros at Selinus, apparently designed – as the Pontic amulet seems to have been – to prevent rival litigants from testifying in a lawsuit. It uses the following formula several times in succession (SGD 99): “I register (ἐνγράφω) Mr. So-and-so and the tongue of Mr. So-and-so, (the tongue) that has been twisted back to the point of uselessness (ἀπεστράμενην ἐπ’ ἀτ<ε>λείαι).” Here the perfect passive participle of ἀποστρέφειν clearly designates the desired result of the magical action, which is absolute, just as it is on the Pontic amulet: the tongue is to be “twisted back”, i.e. distorted so it cannot be used, rather than “turned away” from the person who has written or commissioned the spell. On side B of the tablet moreover, the curse is inscribed in a continuous spiral starting from the edge and moving to the center: the shape of the inscription itself, in short, reflects the contortion described in the text.

This idea of twisting as a means of confounding and restraining a rival is even more evident in a series of early effigies that display unnaturally contorted limbs: archaic bronze “voodoo dolls” from the Peloponnese and nearby islands and lead ones from classical Athens and Sicily that have their heads or their feet twisted completely around. A very early archaic cast-bronze from Tegea, for example, has its head and feet twisted completely around and another possibly archaic one from Cephalonia has its feet and one arm twisted



Figure 2. Undated lead figurine from Athens (after *Melusine* 9 [1898–1899] 104, fig. 2).

completely around (see figure 1)<sup>18</sup>. A Sicilian effigy, this one in lead, has the names of ten victims inscribed on its chest in letter-forms that date to the early fourth century: its head and feet are rotated 180 degrees and it is quite obvious that this is the fate wished upon these ten individuals<sup>19</sup>. There are two similar lead effigies from Athens, moreover: one undated example whose head is completely twisted around (see figure 2) and another of third-century BCE date whose feet were originally molded facing forward and then roughly pinched and twisted around (see figure 3)<sup>20</sup>. These images – many of which also have their arms bound behind their backs – are, as an occasional inscription re-

18 C. A. Faraone, “Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil: The Defensive Use of ‘Voodoo Dolls’ in Ancient Greece”, *Classical Antiquity* 10 (1991) 165–205 nos 8 and 10. K. A. Neugebauer, *Katalog der statuarischen Bronzen im Antiquarium* 1 (Berlin 1931) 66–67, dates the Tegean figurine to the early seventh century BCE and describes the Cephalonian one as “late archaic”, although P. Perdrizet, “Les pieds ou les genoux au rebours”, *Mélusine* 9 (1898–1899) 193–196, had suggested a Hellenistic or even a Roman date for the latter.

19 Ibid. no. 16.

20 Ibid. nos 2 and 7. The second figure also has nails driven into its chest and stomach and has its hands twisted violently behind its back. The head is presently missing, but it is unlikely – given the parallels – that it was decapitated. More likely the head was also twisted about and then after a long period of time the lead weakened along the stress lines made by the twisting and the head fell off. See Faraone (n. 18) 194.

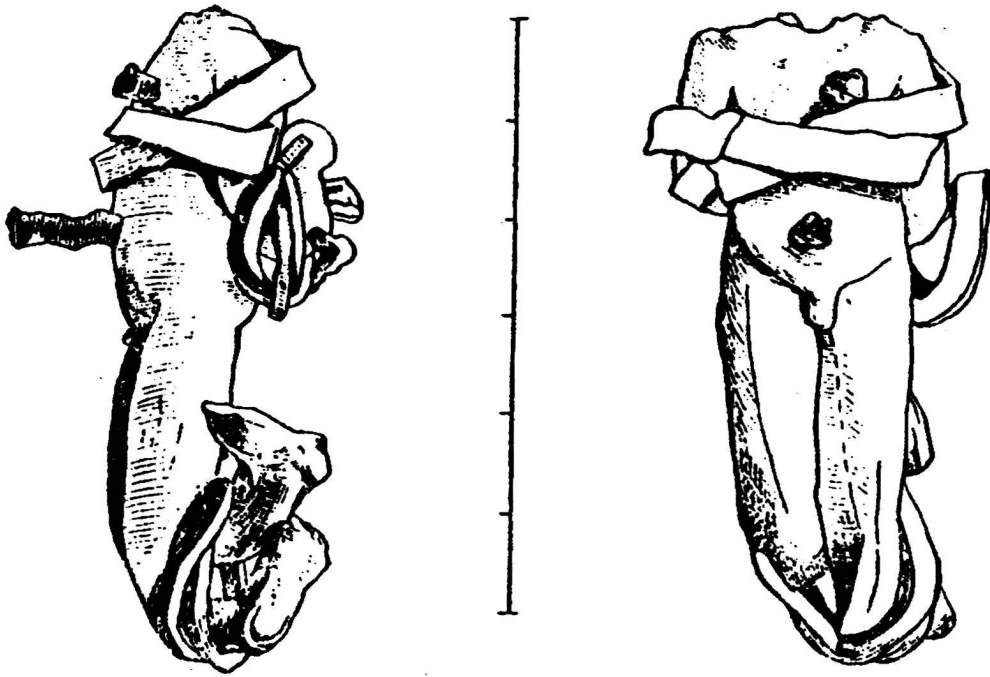


Figure 3. Third-century BCE lead figurine from Athens (after *Philologus* 61 [1902] 37).

veals, simply plastic representations of the verbal formulas inscribed on the lead curses and used by private individuals to inhibit the activities of their rivals<sup>21</sup>. It is important to stress, moreover, that this kind of treatment of effigies was not designed to actually break the legs or the necks of the intended victims, but rather to confound them completely so that they are unable to act<sup>22</sup>. This is clear from the general tenor of the inscribed *defixiones* of the classical and Hellenistic periods, which never call for the breaking of necks or ankles or for the demise of the victim, but which do on occasion aim at “reversing” the cognitive and physical abilities of the victim in a manner similar to the treatment of these effigies. A fourth-century BCE curse from Athens, for example, is inscribed backwards (i.e. right to left), and this peculiarity is explained in the curse itself as follows (*DTA* 67): “Just as the words are cold and reversed (ἐπαρίστερα, lit. “written right to left”), so too may the words of Krates be cold and reversed.”<sup>23</sup>

21 D. Comparetti, “Figurina plumbea iscritta”, in: *Miscellanea di studi sicelioti ed italioti in onore di Paolo Orsi*, Arch. Stor. Sicilia 28 (Catania 1921) 194–197, and D. R. Jordan, “New Archaeological Evidence for the Practice of Magic in Classical Athens”, in: *Praktika of the 12th International Congress of Classical Archaeology, Sept. 4–10, 1983* (Athens 1988) 273–277, discuss the inscribed lead effigies of classical date from Sicily and Athens.

22 Faraone (n. 18) 193–194.

23 Here the words are “cold” because they are inscribed in lead and “reversed” from the normal left-to-right direction of writing common in this period. Another good example is an Attic curse of similar date (*SGD* 40): “Just as these things (i.e. the letters) are backwards so too may things be backwards for her” (ὥσπερ ταῦτα ἀνένπαλιν ... οὕτω ἐκείνη ἀνένπαλιν). See Faraone (n. 17) 7–8 for a fuller discussion.



Much later binding curses use the simplex form of the verb στρέφειν or its intensive form καταστρέφειν in similar ways. A third- or fourth-century CE curse inscribed on a small square of papyrus was apparently designed to stop a runaway slave-girl. In a persuasively analogical manner it uses the twisting motions of a hand-mill to attack various parts of the victim: “As the Hermes-stone(?) of the mill is twisted and as this chit is ground, so too twist the brain and the heart and the mind of Zetous.”<sup>24</sup> The analogy used here (ὥσπερ στρέφεται ... οὕτως στρέψον) clearly does not aim to divert the slave-girl in one direction or another, but rather to stop her headlong flight completely by contorting or confounding her cognitive faculties<sup>25</sup>. Curses of Roman imperial date also seek to twist rival charioteers “upside down” or “against the ground”. A lead tablet from Tunisia, for example, reads: “twist upside down the soul of Hesychius” and two Syrian curses of similar date contain the reiterated imperatives στρέψον κατάστρεψον (“twist, twist upside down!”) as well as the plural imperative διαστρέψατε (“twist completely around!”)<sup>26</sup>. Late-antique incantations found at Rome and Antioch also use κατάστρεψατε (“twist upside down!”) against charioteers and two at Athens give the command “twist upside down ... her strength and power!” or use the same verb in a purpose clause “in order that you may twist him and his thoughts upside down!”<sup>27</sup> Other binding spells found at Carthage urge a demon to “twist [i.e. the charioteer] against the earth!” (στρέψον ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν *DT* 234–235, 238–240). In all but the last of these later curses (including the curse against the runaway slave-girl), the goal is to twist

24 *SM* 56: ὥσπερ στρέφεται ... οὕτως στρέψον τὸν ἐγκέφαλον καὶ τὴν καρδίαν καὶ τὴν διάνοιαν. For the concept of “persuasive analogy” (magic = good rhetoric) as opposed to “sympathy” (magic = bad science), see Faraone (n. 17) 8, who summarizes the work of S. J. Tambiah, “The Magical Power of Words”, *Man* 3 (1968) 175–208, and idem, “Form and Meaning of Magical Acts: A Point of View”, in: R. Horton/R. Finnegan (eds), *Modes of Thought* (London 1973) 199–229.

25 For more detailed discussions, see C.A. Faraone, “Hermes without the Marrow: Another Look at a Puzzling Magical Spell”, *ZPE* 72 (1988) 279–286, and the comments of Daniel and Maltomini on *SM* 56.

26 *SGD* 147: κατάστρεψον ... ψυχὴν τοῦ Ἡσυχίου; the two Syrian curses are *DT* 15.42 and 16 frag. X, lines 4–5 (bis). The compound verb καταστρέφειν is used of the act of “turning over” agricultural land with a plow and “upsetting” or “up-ending” a cup of wine; see *LSJ* s.v. The reiterated phrase στρέψον κατάστρεψον is therefore perhaps better translated into English idiom as “turn, turn over”, but I use here the more awkward phrase “twist, twist upside down” for the sake of consistency, since I everywhere else translate the non-directional and distortive sense of στρέφειν with the verb “to twist” and the directional sense with the verb “to turn”.

27 The curses from Rome are all copied from a handbook: κατάστρεψατε (*DT* 161 and 187); ἵνα ... κατάστρέψητε; *DT* 161–163, 165–167 and 187. See A. Hollmann, “A Curse Tablet from the Circus at Antioch”, *ZPE* (forthcoming) for the new tablet from the hippodrome in Antioch. The two from Athens were apparently not used against charioteers or athletes (the first is against a woman): κατάστρεψον ... τὴν ἰσχὴν, τὴν δύναμιν (*SGD* 38.21) and ἵνα ... κατάστρέψῃς αὐτὸν καὶ τὴν γνώμην αὐτοῦ (*SGD* 23.3). A recipe “For wrecking chariots” in a late-antique magical handbook (*PGM* IV 2210–2214) recommends inscribing this short incantation on a tin strip: “Twist upside down (κατάστρεψον) Mr. So-and-so and those who are with him.”



the victims or their cognitive faculties (heart, brain, διάνοια, soul, γνώμη) or power (δύναμις, ἰσχύς) in such a way that they cannot finish the race in the hippodrome or (for the slave-girl) the race to freedom. The popularity of the compound verb καταστρέφειν (“twist upside down”) and the unique phrase “twist him against the earth” in the charioteer curses have led some scholars to think (see n. 26) that the verb καταστρέφειν is to be translated rather literally as “to (cause him to) overturn”, that is: to cause the chariot to flip over and crash. The use of these same verbs on the non-charioteer curses from Athens – one against a woman – and the focus in some of the charioteer curses on the abstract qualities of the driver (his thoughts or power) make such a literal rendering questionable, as does the parallel use of the verb διαστρέφειν (“to twist completely around”) in a pair of Syrian curses against charioteers<sup>28</sup>.

But regardless of how precisely we translate these particular compound forms of the verb στρέφειν, they clearly do not have the directional sense that ἀποστρέφειν has in the amuletic texts discussed earlier. In short it seems best to interpret these verbs generally as the linguistic equivalent to the physical distortion of the heads and limbs of the bronze and lead effigies discussed earlier, which are likewise twisted completely around. The three exceptional amulets discussed earlier also seem to depend on this earlier tradition of curses. The command on the gold tablet from Pontus, for instance, to “twist back” a legal adversary clearly recalls the common use of *defixiones* in Athens and elsewhere to bind legal opponents. Likewise the relatively early date of the gold amulet against headache (early 2nd century CE), its use of an anthropomorphized ailment (“the Grim-Faced One”) and its failure to indicate the direction of the “turning” (i.e. away from the patient) suggests that in this amulet, too, the verb should be translated in the absolute sense: “Twist back!”

Our final series of comparanda for the use of the verb ἀποστρέφειν appear in a series of erotic incantations inscribed on lead, which seem to borrow their language and rituals from this same tradition of binding spells<sup>29</sup>. They differ in important ways, however, from their models and provide us with further examples of the divertive or directional use of compound forms of στρέφειν to “turn” victims or their body parts “towards” the users of the spell or “away” from their rivals. A lead tablet from Nemea of Hellenistic or Roman date, for example, was apparently used in the context of erotic jealousy: “I turn away (ἀποστρέφω) Euboulês from (ἀπό) Aineas, from his forehead, face, eyes, mouth, breast, soul, belly, penis, anus, from his entire body.”<sup>30</sup> Recipes for erotic

28 DT 15 and 16 (see note 26 above) were found rolled up together and they both curse the same man.

29 For the frequent crossover between curses and erotic magic, see C. A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge MA 1999) 41–68.

30 SGD 57. Previous editors have dated this text to the late Classical period, but D. R. Jordan, “New Greek Curse Tablets (1985–2000)”, *GRBS* 41 (2000) 32 has recently described it (rightly in my view) as “Hellenistic-Roman”.

binding spells found among much later magical handbooks show us that these spells could also be used to divert the victim *towards* someone else: “turn the heart (στρέψον τὴν καρδίαν) of Ms. So-and-so ... towards (πρός) Mr. So-and-so” and “turn (ἐπίστρεψον) the soul of Ms. So-and-so towards (πρός) me, Mr. so-and-so, in order that she may love me”<sup>31</sup>. It would seem, then, that in the realm of erotic spells, at least, ἀποστρέφειν and related verbs could have the same directional focus (turning something this way or that) that we saw in the amulets quoted above. There is, however, one possible exception: a rather elaborate recipe (*PGM* XII 59–63) contains an address to the god Eros as “you who once twisted (στρέψας) all things and then straightened them out (ἐπανορθώσας) again” and then immediately calls on him to “bring it about that all men and all women are turned (στρέφεται) toward (εἰς) the desire of me”. Note that although the requested action at the end of the spell uses the same directional notion of “turning” or “diverting” the victim “toward” the person using the spell, the mythic exemplum of Eros does not seem quite apt, for it appears to invoke a pair of opposites concerned with distortion (“twisted” and “straight”), that is: the god can distort or twist all things and then set them right again.

The apparent contradiction in this recipe is useful, however, in summarizing the differences between these two uses the verb ἀποστρέφειν in magical texts. The apotropaic sense, which we encounter in Hellenistic and later erotic spells and in Roman-era amulets, usually indicates that the object of the spell, either a lover or a disease, is to be moved in some direction or other. The best translation of the verb in these spells is “to turn away” or “to turn back”. We have seen, however, that the verb ἀποστρέφειν is also used in a Sicilian binding spell of classical date and in the earliest of the amulets (e.g. the gold tablet from Pontus) without any prepositional phrase at all and seems to refer to some kind of absolute distortion. In this earlier tradition, therefore, the verb seems to be best translated by the verb “twist” instead of “turn” (e.g. in the case of ἀποστρέφειν: “twist back” instead of “turn away”), since the goal is to incapacitate the victims rather than divert them. Given the evidence for the use in the archaic and classical periods of magical effigies with heads and feet distorted for similar effect, it seems safe to suppose that in the *Peace* Aristophanes is using the verb ἀποστρέφειν (without a prepositional phrase indicating direction) to refer to the non-directional, distortive actions typical of early Greek binding spells and not the later Roman-era tradition of divertive amulets.

31 *PGM* XIc (2nd or 3rd century CE) and *PGM* IV 1807–1809 (4th century CE). Elsewhere we find the verb κλίνειν (“to incline” or “to bend”) used for similarly divertive purposes. The last mentioned recipe, for example uses this verb in the rubric: “It inclines (κλίνει) and leads the soul of whomever you wish” (1721–1722) and in an earlier incantation: “I incline (κλίνω) the soul of Mr. So-and-so” (1723). Likewise the curse mentioned above against Hesychius (n. 26) uses an intensive form of κλίνειν in tandem with an intensive form of στρέφειν: “Lay low (κατάκλεινον) Hesychius, whom Hyperechia bore, within seven days and do not release him and twist, twist upside-down (στρέψον κατάστρεψον) the soul of Hesychius.”

Let us return, then, to Aristophanes' Samothracian prayer and re-examine all of it: νῦν ἔστιν εὐξασθαι καλὸν / ἀποστραφῆναι τοῦ μετιόντος τῷ πόδε. There are, to my knowledge, no examples of amulets that mention the feet of an attacking demon, but there are instances of Athenian binding spells, which bind, among other limbs and faculties, the feet of the victim<sup>32</sup>. There are, moreover, a number of good parallels in the amuletic tradition for Aristophanes' use of the present participle of a verb of motion (τοῦ μετιόντος) to indicate the hostile approach that is to be interrupted by a successful Samothracian prayer. We have already seen the similar expression in the inscribed gold amulet used to cure ophthalmia: "I pray to you (ἐπεύχομαί σοι), ο great name of Iao: twist back (ἀπόστρεψον) the ophthalmia that is attacking (τὴν ἐπιφερομένην ὀφθαλμίαν) and no longer allow any attack (ἐμβολή) of ophthalmia."<sup>33</sup> If we ignore the non-Greek addressee of the prayer (Iaō = Yahweh), we can see some obvious similarities with the truncated prayer described in the *Peace*: "Now is a good time to pray (εὐξασθαι) that the feet (τῷ πόδε) of the one who is approaching (τοῦ μετιόντος) be twisted back (ἀποστραφῆναι)." We find the use of a similar present participle on an early Christian amulet that was apparently used to protect a small child or baby: "Restrain and hinder the one approaching tiny Sophia (κατάσχησον καὶ κατάργησον τὸν ἐρχόμενον τῆς μικρᾶς Σοφίας<ς>)"<sup>34</sup>, and in a recipe for an amulet to bind anger and bring victory: "Protect me from everything that is attacking me (ἀπὸ παντός πράγμα-τος ἐπερχομένου μου)."<sup>35</sup> In all three of these amulets it is quite clear that the

32 In none of these, however, are the feet singled out; they usually appear in a list of body parts, e.g.: *DTA* 60 (hand, limbs, foot); 68 (hands, feet, tongue); 80 (φρένες and feet); 86 (hands and feet); 89 (the feet, the head, the hands, the belly etc.); 90 (the tongue and the hands and the feet); 93b (feet, hands, body, heart); and 96–97 (the hands and the feet and the tongue and the soul). *DT* 47 (hands, feet, soul, tongue); 49 (hands, feet, eyes and mouth); 50 (body and soul and feet and hands); 64 (hands, feet, mouth?); For a good analysis of such curses, see H. S. Versnel, "And any other part of the entire body there may be ...: An Essay on Anatomical Curses", in: F. Graf (ed.), *Ansichten griechischer Rituale: Geburtstags-Symposium für Walter Burkert* (Stuttgart 1998) 217–267.

33 *GMA* 53; see above notes 11 and 16.

34 *SM* 13 (a narrow strip of papyrus that was rolled up tightly and probably carried as an amulet; its provenance is unknown and it is dated by the editors to the 4th century CE). Daniel, ad loc. translates the verb καταργεῖν as "to annihilate" without comment, but this seems to me to be incorrect since in the active voice the verb basically means "to make someone idle" or "to hinder". Given the fact that it is paired with the verb κατέχειν ("to restrain"), it seems best to translate it in the usual manner here. For the later Greek use – in this text and the one discussed in the next note – of the genitive to indicate the direction or the goal of a motion, see the comments of Daniel ad loc.

35 *PGM* XXXVI 177, which is part of a recipe for an "anger binding and victory charm" (θυμο-κάτοχον and νικητικόν), a spell that is clearly drawn from the Greek tradition of binding magic. It begins with an oral invocation that commands: "Make silent (φμώσατε) the mouths of those who speak against me", using a verb found on many *defixiones*: see e.g. *DT* 15 and D. R. Jordan, "Late Feasts for Ghosts", in: R. Hägg (ed.) *Ancient Greek Cult Practice from the Epigraphical Evidence* (Stockholm 1994) 143 with note 34. The second half is a written spell that ends with the

approach is a hostile one. Indeed, even the Christian amulet for the baby Sophia, which uses the much vaguer simplex form of the verb ἔρχομαι, adds: “If it is a demon of shivering, restrain it! If it is a phantom, restrain it! If it is a δαιμόνιον, restrain it!” All three of these amulets, then, use anonymous participles of aggressive motion – twice with the definite article – in a manner quite similar to the way Aristophanes uses τοῦ μετιόντος in the Samothracian prayer. Despite their late-Roman date, they are useful comparanda because they seem connected to an earlier Greek tradition of the magical use of effigies, as is evident in a Cyrenean *lex sacra* of classical date that instructs a householder to make images of an angry ghost, and then – after treating the statue to a small feast – to carry it away from the house into the wilds<sup>36</sup>. This recipe uses the noun ἰκέσιος, “visitant”, to describe anonymously the dangerous ghost, a noun derived from a verbal stem of motion (ἵκ-) that means to “to come” or “to arrive”. Here, then, as in the amulet texts – and, I would suggest, in the Samothracian prayer – the dangerous demon is described as one who comes near or after the person who needs protection.

From a linguistic point of view, then, we can find parallels in magical texts for all three parts of the prayer that Aristophanes imagines in the mouth of a Samothracian initiate. And although there is a well documented tradition of using the verb ἀποστρέφειν in its apotropaic meaning to “turn away” diseases and lovers from their destinations, this tradition is relatively late – the earliest texts are Hellenistic – and is of little help in explaining the Samothracian prayer, which contains no indication from or towards whom Kudoimos is to be diverted. On the other hand, the classical tradition of “apostrophaic” binding spells and contorted effigies and the earlier amulets provide excellent parallels for all three parts of the prayer: the non-directional use of the main verb (i.e. “twist” not “turn”), the targeting of a specific body part (the feet of Kudoimos), and the use of a present participle of a verb of motion to describe anonymously the approaching danger. We should not, of course, overdraw the distinction between binding spells and amulets, for in the classical period, at least, binding spells were often seen or represented themselves in a defensive light: binding or twisting an enemy’s body parts was designed to protect oneself from his or her hostile attack<sup>37</sup>, in just the same manner that amulets “distorted” agents of danger who, like the “grim-faced” headache-demon, were imagined anthropomorphically. The major difference, of course, is that the human enemies (i.e. those named in the binding curses) are more easily imagined in human form,

formula quoted above, that seems to be directed at the same people – i.e. despite the language of an amulet – “protect me” – it is aimed at men, not demons or disease.

36 SEG 9.72.111–121. For full translation, bibliography and commentary see R. Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford 1983) 332–351 and Faraone (n. 7) 81–84.

37 Faraone (n. 17) 19–20.



that is: having limbs and tongues that needed to be “twisted back” or “distorted” in order that they be prevented from attacking the person who is performing or commissioning the spell.

In Aristophanes’ *Peace*, the comic hero asks the audience if there happen to be any Samothracian initiates present, who might pray that “both feet of the approaching one be twisted back”. One question remains, however: why does Trygaios make this kind of plea at this point in the play? Is it, as most editors have claimed, a *παρὰ προσδοκίαν* joke that substitutes the feet of Kudoimos at the end of the line for something that would be more serious in the original, for example: “the destruction of all Greece”? I suggest, in fact, that this expression is not the vehicle for an off-hand and passing joke, but rather that it evokes an important and much discussed ritual side of Old Comedy: the binding or driving off of evil demons who try to ruin the successful outcome of the central comic plot, which usually aims at a return to an idealized time and place of limitless eating, sex and peace. The parallels, for instance, between aversive rituals like the *φαρμακός*-rite and comic aim of driving off or incapacitating comic antagonists have long been noted and studied by scholars<sup>38</sup>. In the case of the *Peace*, however, scholars have not significantly appreciated the fact that comic poets might also model their dramatic actions or plots on equally old rituals designed to bind or cripple dangerous demons. In texts as early as the *Iliad*, for example, we find evidence that Greeks in Sparta, Boeotia, and in northern Greece ritually bound Ares and other war-gods in sealed containers or in chains, in the hope of similarly binding enemies or hostile armies and thereby preventing their approach<sup>39</sup>. In the fifth book of the *Iliad*, we find what is apparently a very old myth about the annual binding of Ares (385–391)<sup>40</sup>:

38 The classic but deeply flawed study of F. M. Cornford, *The Origins of Attic Comedy* (London 1934) still has many useful comments and insights, provided his overarching thesis and general conclusions are ignored. For two recent and cautious revivals of some of his ideas, see K. J. Reckford, *Aristophanes’ Old-and-New Comedy* (Chapel Hill 1987) 36–45, esp. 39–42, and A. M. Bowie, *Aristophanes: Myth, Ritual and Comedy* (Cambridge 1993) 3–5. An uncontroversial example of the crossover between ritual and comic action is Aristophanes’ use of the Athenian *φαρμακός*-rite to frame the abuse of Cleon in the *Knights*, for which see Bowie *ibid.* 74–75.

39 For a more detailed discussion with full bibliography, see Faraone (n. 18) 166–172.

40 The Greeks of later antiquity seem to have recognized the magical act reported in this passage. The opening line (385), for instance, is twice quoted in a magical papyrus as an efficacious charm (*PGM* IV 474 and 830). Although these quoted lines lack the rubrics, which accompany most of the other Homeric verses cited in the magical papyri, it seems an obvious inference that the verse (and indeed in the handbook this may simply be shorthand for the entire passage) was to be used in a binding ritual. Compare the quotation of *Il.* 8.424 (“Will you dare to raise your mighty spear against Zeus?”) accompanied by the rubric “To Restrain Anger,” or *Il.* 10.193 (“Let’s ... seize, lest we become a joy to our enemies”) which is to be used “To Get a Friend”. The agricultural handbook *Geoponica* recommends (10.87.6) attaching verse 387 of the Ares passage (“... and three months and ten he lay chained in a bronze cauldron”) to a tree to prevent it from prematurely casting its fruit, i.e. it “binds” the tree to hold on to its fruit until the correct moment in its annual cycle.

τλῆ μὲν Ἄρης ὅτε μιν Ὀτος κρατερός τ' Ἐφιάλτης  
 παῖδες Ἀλωῆος, δῆσαν κρατερῶ ἐνὶ δεσμῶ·  
 χαλκῆω δ' ἐν κεράμῳ δέδετο τρισκαίδεκα μῆνας·  
 καὶ νῦ κεν ἔνθ' ἀπόλοιτο Ἄρης ἄτος πολέμοιο,  
 εἰ μὴ μητρυνὴ περικαλλῆς Ἡερίβοια  
 Ἑρμέα ἐξηγγειλεν· ὃ δ' ἐξέκλεψεν Ἄρηα  
 ἥδη τειρόμενον, χαλεπὸς δέ ἐ δεσμὸς ἐδάμνα.

Ares suffered when powerful Ephialtes and Otos, sons of Aloeus, bound him in a very strong bond, and three months and ten he was chained in a bronze jar; then and there might Ares, insatiable of fighting, have been destroyed if Eriboia, their stepmother, the surpassingly lovely, had not brought word to Hermes, who stole Ares away out of it as he was being worn down, for the grievous bonds were breaking him.

The mention of the two heros, Ephialtes and Otos, probably points to a Boeotian locale for this myth, but one must be cautious as other sources suggest that similar tales were set in Thrace and Crete<sup>41</sup>.

This story about Ares is curious because it tells of mortal men binding a god. For a long time it was thought to be connected with Etruscan legends about the Roman god Mars and depictions of him coming out of a cauldron<sup>42</sup>, but recently scholars have profitably compared it with some indigenous Greek rituals performed in historical times<sup>43</sup>, a shift in interpretation precipitated in part by the discovery of an inscription preserving an oracle of Apollo at Claros that orders the people of Syedra, a city on the southern coast of Asia Minor to<sup>44</sup>:

- 41 A papyrus chrestomathy (*POxy* 1. 1241 col. 4.20–24) dated to the second century A.D. reports: “Others say that weapons were first made in Thrace by Enyalios, the son of Zeus, who was bound by Aloeus and his sons, and rescued by Apollo who killed them.” A similar myth seems to have been told (and located) at the Cretan city of Biennos, whose name according to Stephen of Byzantium (s.v. Βίεννος) commemorated the βία (“act of violence”) which had befallen Ares, “whom they say [was bound] there by Otos and Ephialtes, the sons of Poseidon, and even now they give Ares the sacrifice called the ἑκατομφόνια”. The parentage of the two men is divine in this version and there is no mention of escape. The ἑκατομφόνια was a very old form of sacrifice to Ares in commemoration of warriors who killed one hundred (ἑκατόν) foes; it appears to have been peculiar to the Messenians, the Cretans of Biennos and perhaps the Athenians; see A. Tresp, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Kultschriften* (Giessen 1914) 175–177 for a discussion of Ares, Biennos and all the pertinent texts which seem to go back to Diophantos of Sparta.
- 42 See L. R. Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek States* (Oxford 1906) 407 and E. Simon “Il dio Marte nell’ arte dell’ Italia centrale”, *Stud. Etr.* 46 (1978) 135–147, for the traditional interpretation, corrected by H. S. Versnel, “Apollo and Mars One Hundred Years After Roscher”, *Visible Religion* 4–5 (1985–1986) 147–148, who is surely right in interpreting the Etruscan artifacts as depictions of a rejuvenation rite in which (like Medea’s claim in the deadly trick played on Pelias) the god is annually “reborn”. Aside from the annual pattern, this rite does little to explain the Greek myths about binding and releasing a *fully grown* Ares.
- 43 F. Graf, *Nordionische Kulte* (Zurich 1985) 81–96; H. S. Versnel, “Greek Myth and Ritual: The Case of Kronos”, in: J. N. Bremmer (ed.), *Interpretations of Greek Mythology* (London 1987) 121–152 and Faraone (n. 7) 74–75.
- 44 G. E. Bean/T. B. Mitford, *Journeys in Rough Cilicia in 1962 and 1963* (Vienna 1965) 21–23 no. 26, and F. Sokolowski “Sur l’oracle de Claros destiné à la ville Syédra”, *BCH* 92 (1966) 519–522



... set up an image of Ares, the blood-stained slayer of men, in the midst of your town and perform sacrifices beside it, while holding him [sc. the statue] in the iron bonds of Hermes. On the other side let Dike giving sentence judge him, while he himself is like to one pleading. For thus he will be peacefully disposed to you ... (trans. H. W. Parke)

This oracle was probably issued in first-century BCE just prior to Pompey's famous crusade against the pirates in the Mediterranean and despite the array of pronouns whose reference is not always certain, one can easily make out the instructions and the promised result: if they make a statue of Ares bound in the "iron bonds of Hermes"<sup>45</sup> and set it crouching or kneeling before a menacing statue of Dike ("Justice")<sup>46</sup>, this will help to restrain and humble the hostile force of the pirates. This ritual is, of course, much more elaborate than simply binding an image of Ares; it creates a scenario in which both the intended victims (Ares = the pirates) and the performers of the spell (Dike = the people of Syedra) are represented<sup>47</sup>.

Other explicit references to the binding or incarceration of effigies of Ares or hostile armies are all much later, but they seem to follow the same pattern. Pausanias, for instance speaks of "an ancient image of Enyalios in fetters" that he saw at Sparta (3.15.7) and we find a number of other references to the similar treatment of effigies in later antiquity<sup>48</sup>. An anonymous epigram preserved in

date the inscription to the first century BCE. L. Robert, *Documents de l'Asie Mineure Méridionale* (Geneva 1966) 91–100 and J. Wiseman, "Gods, War and Plague in the Times of the Antonines", in: D. Mano-Zissi/J. Wiseman (eds), *Studies in the Antiquities of Stobi*, vol. 1 (Beograd 1973) 174–179 attempted unsuccessfully to date the inscription to the reign of Lucius Verus using numismatic evidence, but see E. Maroti, "A Recently Found Versified Oracle Against Pirates", *Acta Ant.* 16 (1968) 233–238 for a good refutation of their arguments.

45 For binding as the traditional expertise of Hermes, see Servius *Aen.* 6.42 (for Hermes' role in some obscure myths about the binding of Charon and Prometheus) and C. A. Faraone, "An Accusation of Magic in Classical Athens (Ar. *Wasps* 946–948)", *TAPA* 119 (1989) 158 n. 27 for his role in Athens as *κἀτοχος* ("the Restrainer") on Attic *defixiones*. The expression in the inscription ("while restraining him with the iron bonds of Hermes") need not mean that the god himself was actually depicted, but only that he was believed to have invented the shackles or that they were within his traditional sphere of activity (cf. the *Veneris vincula* in line 78 of Vergil's *Eclogue* 8; surely we need not suppose that Venus made an epiphany during the spell).

46 For full discussion, see C. A. Faraone "Clay Hardens and Wax Melts: Magical Role-Reversal in Vergil's Eighth *Eclogue*", *CP* 84 (1989) 296–297, and idem (n. 7) 75–76. Sokolowski (n. 44) 521 suggests that Dike in Syedra probably was depicted in an aggressive stance like the Dike brandishing a *ῥάβδος* and throttling Adikia on the Chest of Cypselus (Paus. 5.18.1–2).

47 This kind of complicated magical ritual is not, however, unique; it can be paralleled in a recipe preserved in the Greek magical papyri, as well in descriptions of similar erotic spells in Vergil and Horace; see Faraone (n. 46).

48 An historical account roughly contemporary with the Palatine epigram quoted below describes a similar form of ritual which may have been aimed at averting the same menace from Thrace (Photius *Bib.* 80 p. 177 = Olympiodorus of Thebes *FHG* 4.63.27 = Frag. 27 [Blockley]): "The historian says that he heard from a certain Valerius, a man of high rank, about silver statues which were consecrated to ward off barbarians ... of barbarous style, with hands bound, dressed in the embroidered clothing of the barbarians, with long hair and inclining toward the North, that is toward the land of the barbarians. As soon as the statues were removed, a few days later the whole

the *Palatine Anthology*, for example, was said to have been inscribed “on the base of an Ares [statue] which lies buried in Thrace” (9.805): “As long as fierce Ares here has been laid low upon the ground, the Gothic peoples shall never set foot upon Thrace.” It is unclear exactly how the image has been treated; the rubric states that it was buried, but the epigram itself uses ambiguous language (κέκλιται, “laid low”), suggesting that somehow Ares was also made subservient<sup>49</sup>. In any event, as in the case of the burial of the statue of Peace in Aristophanes’ play, the ritual clearly seems to have involved the burial of an effigy of the god in hopes of stopping a hostile and approaching enemy; here Ares appears to represent the warlike Goths who were a continuous threat to the Thracian border in the late antique period<sup>50</sup>. The Greeks had similar binding rites aimed at other hostile gods and demons, or told myths about them. Sisyphus, for example, was said to have bound Thanatos (“Death”) for a time and as long as he remained bound, no-one died (scholia to *Iliad* 6.153). And we hear elsewhere of the Greeks binding or incarcerating effigies of hostile ghosts or images of an especially pestilential Artemis<sup>51</sup>.

It is not difficult, I suggest, to see a comic corollary to these magical rituals in those hilariously slapstick scenes in which a comic antagonist is bound, muzzled and carried bodily off the stage. The treatment of the Proboulos at the hands of Lysistrata’s cronies quickly springs to mind, of course, or the scene in the *Acharnians* where the chorus tie up a sycophant-spy, pack him like a cheap Athenian vase, and “export” him beyond the borders of Attica (924–958). But of all Aristophanes’ comedies, the one in which binding and release is most central is obviously the *Peace*, which concerns the undoing of a perverse kind of ritual binding: at the beginning of the play we find that a statue of the goddess Peace has been trapped deep inside a cave and until she is released war and destruction will continue to wreak havoc on Greece. Here, as in the case of the

Gothic nation poured over Thrace and shortly afterwards the Huns and the Sarmatians were to invade Illyricum and Thrace also. For the site of the consecration lay between Thrace and Illyricum and to judge from the number of statues, they had been consecrated against the whole of barbarity” (trans. R. C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Late Roman Empire* [Liverpool 1981] ad loc.).

- 49 W. R. Paton, *The Greek Anthology* (Cambridge, MA 1916) ad loc., translates “rests on the ground,” while A. Waltz/F. Saury, *Anthologie Palatine*, VIII (Paris 1974) ad loc., date the epigram to the late third-/early fourth century on account of its “inspiration païenne” and print “couché”, suggesting in a note that “appuyé” might be closer to the sense of the Greek. For the use of the verb κλίνειν in magical texts to mean “make subservient”, see LSJ I 5 (they cite *PGM* IV 1718). The more familiar verb in this context is the intensive form κατακλίνειν, e.g. *PGM* IV 2076, 2450, 2497; and *SGD* 141. See n. 31 for the apparent crossover in use of στρέφειν and κλίνειν (and their compounds with the prefix κατα-) in the Greek tradition of binding magic.
- 50 Compare the equation Ares = Goths in two epigrams from Didyma which celebrate that city’s escape from the siege of the Goths in 262–263 A.D., quoted in J. Fontenrose, *Didyma: Apollo’s Oracle, Cult and Companions* (Berkeley 1988) 23–24.
- 51 For a full discussion see: Faraone (n. 18) 180–189 (human ghosts) and idem (n. 7) 133–135 (Death and Hephaestus) and 132–140 (Artemis).

bound images of Ares or the “voodoo dolls” from Athens and Sicily, the principle of persuasive analogy is at work: as long as the effigy of Peace is trapped in a cave, she is powerless to have any positive effect on humankind. These parallels, moreover, between magical rituals and comic plots put us in a better position to understand why Aristophanes brings a *statue* of Peace on stage and not Peace herself. The comic triumph of the play occurs when Trygaios and the chorus are able to free the statue, which had been buried in a cave (517–519), and then ritually re-inaugurate it in a rather formal ceremony (936ff.)<sup>52</sup>. Foregrounded by this larger plot movement of binding and the release, we can see how Trygaios’ desire to impede Kudoimos with the Samothracian prayer is in perfect ritual counterpoint to his desire to excavate the statue of Peace.

We can, however, press these parallels between magic rites and the *Peace* even further, for in addition to the ritual binding or incarceration of inimical or dangerous gods, there is also some evidence that the Greeks also tried ritually to overcome supernatural enemies or dangers by twisting around the heads or feet of their effigies, just like the “voodoo dolls” discussed earlier. The best extant example of this procedure is a small bronze Etruscan figurine of Heracles leaning on his club: as we can see in figure 4, its head is twisted completely around<sup>53</sup>. This Herakles, with his dog- or wolf-skin cap, was most probably a dangerous death-demon in the Etruscan tradition, so it is understandable that the person who made or owned it would want to stymie his approach by contorting his body, just as Sisyphus was said to have bound Thanatos<sup>54</sup>. Nor is this the only instance of a dangerous god depicted with limbs twisted back. There is, for example, the popular scene in Corinthian black-figure vase-painting of Hephaestus’ return to Olympus from volcanic Lemnos, where the lame god’s foot is sometimes shown twisted completely about<sup>55</sup>. Scholars sometimes attribute Hephaestus’ lameness and the pictorial convention used to illustrate it to a cross-cultural phenomenon in traditional societies, according to which the talents of a lame man (allegedly useless to his village as a soldier or a plowman) are utilized in the role of a blacksmith and/or sorcerer who works primarily in a stationary position<sup>56</sup>, but I have suggested elsewhere that, given the close con-

52 See Olson (n. 3) xliii–iv and ad loc. for discussion.

53 Faraone (n. 18) no. 19. Its legs are broken off at the knees, unfortunately, but I suspect that the feet were inverted as well.

54 The dog-skin or wolf-skin cap usually indicates death-demons and Hades in Etruscan art, see I. Krauskopf, *Todesdaimonen und Totengötter im vorhellenistischen Etrurien*, Biblioteca di Studi Etruschi 16 (Rome 1987) 20–23 and 61–67.

55 T. Carpenter, *Dionysian Imagery in Archaic Greek Art* (Oxford 1986) 16–17 discuss the crossover in iconography between Hephaestus and the padded dancers in Corinthian art. The twisted foot of the god on the François Vase appears to be a unique Attic example.

56 See M. Detienne, “The Feet of Hephaestus”, in: M. Detienne/J. P. Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*, trans. J. Lloyd (Atlantic Highlands 1978) 259–275, who defends the thesis of M. Delcourt, *Héphaistos ou la légende du magicien*, Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l’Université de Liège 146 (Paris 1957) 110–136.

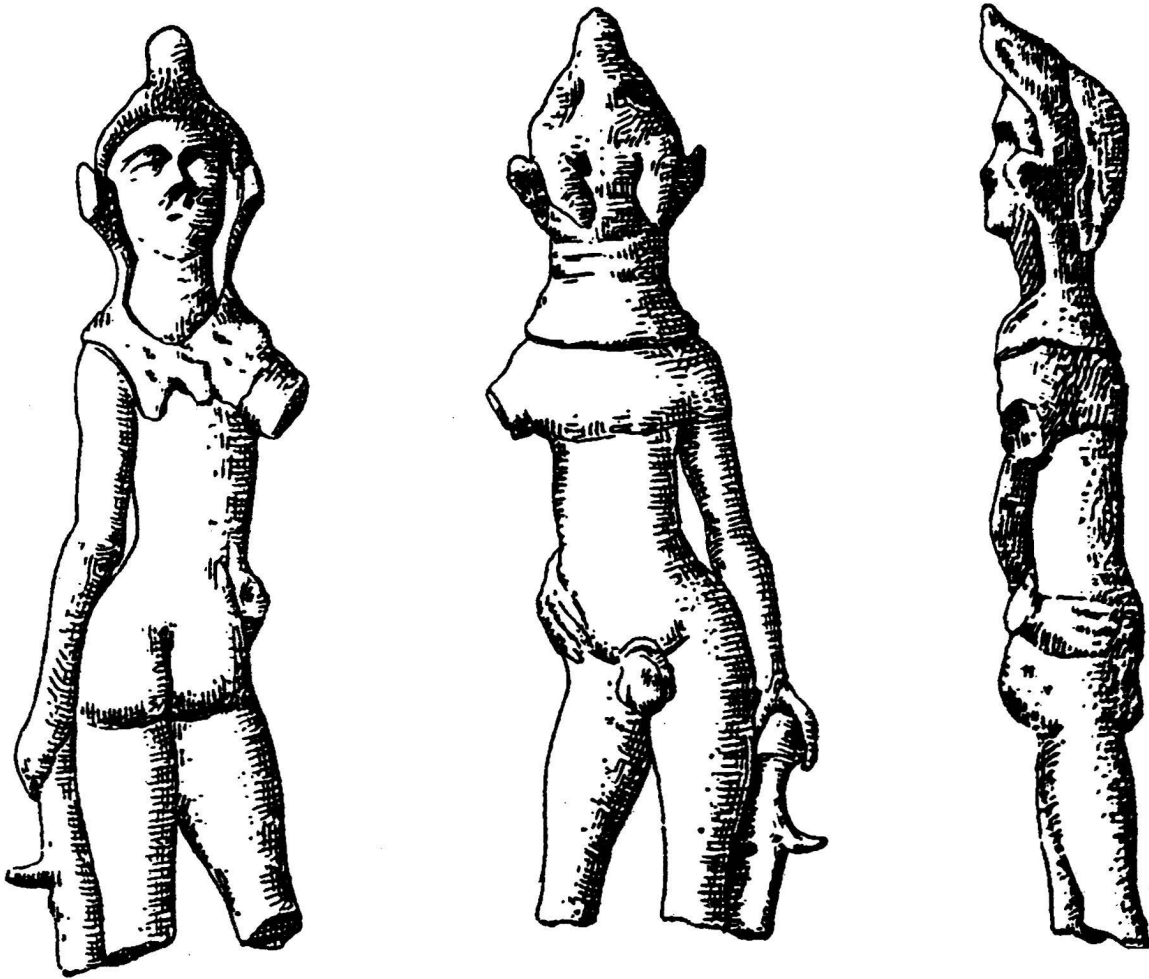


Figure 4. Undated Etruscan bronze figurine from Città di Castello  
(after *Studi Etruschi* 1 [1927] pl. 72a).

nection of Hephaestus with volcanism and dangerous fire on Lemnos and elsewhere, the twisting of his foot may have served a more practical purpose as well: to retard the swift approach of fire generally<sup>57</sup>. Indeed, such evidence suggests that by depicting a dangerous divinity with a twisted foot, the Greeks sought to hinder his ability to attack quickly<sup>58</sup>. Indeed, I suspect that these images of Hephaestus were only hobbled and not bound, because fire is very useful to humankind, as long as its speed (i.e. its capacity to leap nimbly from roof to roof) and power (i.e. its capacity to destroy whole cities) are tightly controlled. The distortion of the Etruscan death-demon Heracles may also follow this logic, for the myth of Tithonus warns us against trying to ward off Death

<sup>57</sup> Faraone (n. 7) 133–135.

<sup>58</sup> The ignorance of this convention in Athens (with the sole exception of the François vase) is understandable, since Hephaestus' dangerous nature was ameliorated there by his positive role as patron of potters and other kiln-workers. See Faraone (n. 7) 134.

completely and this is probably the reason why Sisyphus eventually released Thanatos from his chains. In this tradition of thought, then, it seems best that Death be detained or hobbled for a time, but not completely banished.

In this regard it is interesting to note Pausanias' description of a scene depicted on the famous Chest of Cypselus<sup>59</sup>:

A woman is represented as carrying a white boy asleep on her right arm; on her other arm she has a black boy who is like the one that sleeps. The feet of both boys are *turned in different directions* (διστραμμένους). The inscriptions show, what is easy to see without them, that the boys are Death and Sleep, and that Night is the nurse of both.

I have given the traditional translation above, but it has been argued (rightly in my view) that the participle διστραμμένους used here by Pausanias to describe the feet of the two boys must refer to the same kind of bodily distortion of Hephaestus and as such ought to be translated “completely twisted around” instead of “turned in different directions”<sup>60</sup>. Death and Sleep are of course popularly thought to come and fetch the dying, so it is understandable that they too be depicted in a way that would hinder their prompt arrival<sup>61</sup>. It is also interesting to recall that an ancient commentator on the Samothracian prayer in Aristophanes' *Peace* glosses the verb ἀποστραφῆναι with διαστραφῆναι (“to be completely twisted about”), the same verb that Pausanias uses here to describe the feet of Death and Sleep and the same verb that appears in the pair of Roman-era binding spells discussed earlier (n. 28) that aim to “completely twist around” a rival charioteer so that he will be unable to compete in the races.

It should be clear at this point that at *Peace* 276–279, Aristophanes is not making a passing παρὰ προσδοκίαν joke, because all of three parts of his truncated Samothracian prayer occur in bonafide incantations and prayers that are similarly designed to protect an individual by confounding an approaching danger. Indeed, it is clear that Aristophanes refers to some kind of ritual or prayer by which the initiate attempted to twist the feet of a dangerous god or demon to inhibit his movement. There is, of course, obvious and significant parallel between the ritual binding and or burying of Ares (discussed earlier) to prevent hostile military action and desire to “twist back” the feet of Kudoimos (“Battle-Din”) and prevent him from bringing a pestle with which Polemos (“War”) will grind up and destroy the Greeks. In fact, as we have seen the whole

59 Pausanias 5.18.1. I give the translation of J. G. Frazer, *Pausanias' Description of Greece* (Cambridge 1898) ad loc. with my emphases.

60 Perdrizet (n. 18) 193–196 and G. Q. Giglioli, “Curiosità Archeologiche”, *Stud. Etr.* 3 (1929) 529–531.

61 F. De Ruyt, “Le Thanatos d'Euripide et la Charun étrusque”, *Ant. Class.* 1 (1932) 61–77 discusses Thanatos as a ψυχοπομπός. Death itself was not feared as much in the ancient Greek world as *untimely* (i.e. unnaturally swift) death; see J. ter Vrugt-Lentz, *Mors Immatura* (Groningen 1960). For a Near Eastern example of this kind of distorted feet see a drawing of a seal cylinder in B. Goldman, “The Asiatic Ancestry of the Greek Gorgon”, *Berytus* 14 (1961) 22 on which “Perseus” is shown attacking a “Medusa” whose bird-taloned feet are completely twisted about.



plot of this play is based on folkloric ideas of sympathy: a statue of the goddess Peace has been buried in a cave by War, and as long as it is imprisoned, there can be no peace for mankind. Therefore according to the conventions of Old Comedy, Trygaios needs to do one of two things: either bind or drive off Polemos and Kudoimos or free Peace from her imprisonment. As it turns out, Kudoimos does reappear onstage before the Samothracian prayer can be uttered directly, but luckily for the Greeks he cannot find an appropriate “pestle” to use in Polemos’ mortar, since the Athenian Cleon and the Spartan Brasidas – the greatest and most belligerent of the generals – are dead. Later on, as we have said, Trygaios does succeed in excavating and ritually installing the statue of Peace and thereby ensuring the end of hostilities in the Greek world<sup>62</sup>.

Correspondence:

Prof. Christopher A. Faraone  
The University of Chicago  
Department of Classics  
1010 East 59th Street  
Chicago, Ill. 60637, USA  
E-mail: cf12@midway.uchicago.edu

62 I am greatly indebted to Alexander Hollmann, David R. Jordan and Roy Kotansky, for their helpful comments and advice on earlier versions of this essay and to Martin Devecka for editorial assistance.